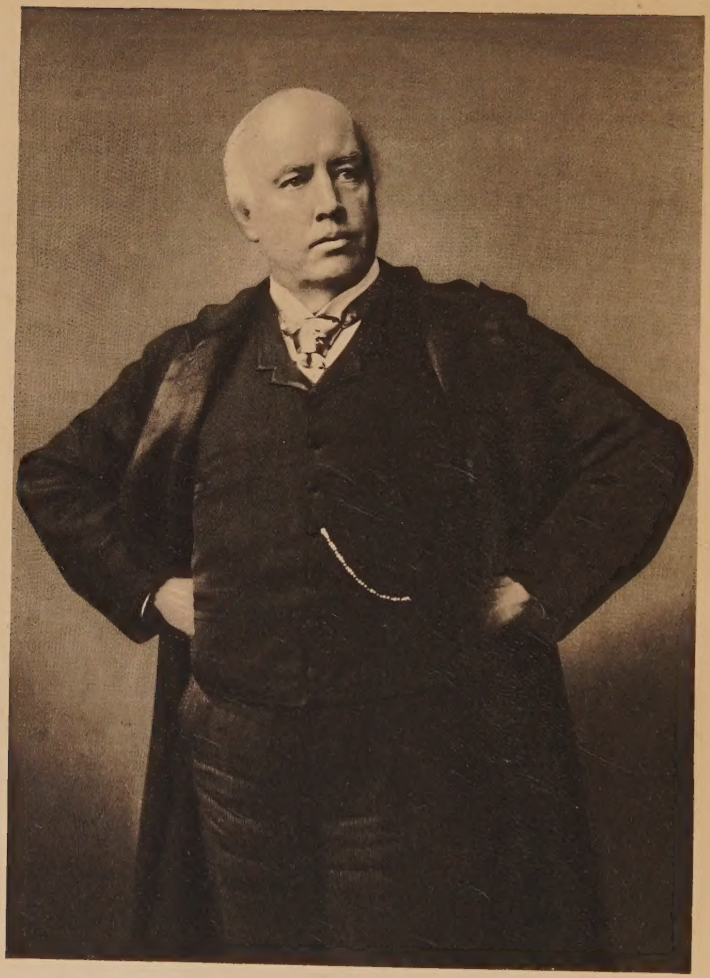
INGERSOLL



1890

R. G. Ingersoll

INGERSOLL

A

BIOGRAPHICAL APPRECIATION

BY

HERMAN E. KITTREDGE

"And so I lay this little wreath
upon this great man's tomb."

NEW YORK
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MCMXI

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TO

LILLIAN R. KITTREDGE

My Wife,

WHOSE SELF-DENYING DEVOTION

TO THE AUTHOR

HAS MADE POSSIBLE THIS "APPRECIATION"

OF ONE

WHOSE DEVOTION EMBRACED MANKIND.

FOREWORD OF THANKS

TO Mrs. Eva A. Ingersoll (widow of Colonel Ingersoll), Mrs. Eva R. Ingersoll Brown (daughter of Colonel Ingersoll), and Mr. Clinton Pinckney Farrell (brother-in-law of Colonel Ingersoll), who have furnished biographical and illustrative material, and who have verified, when necessary, data derived from other sources; to Mrs. Lalla B. Ingersoll (widow of Mr. John C. Ingersoll, a nephew of Colonel Ingersoll), for tendering the use of letters and photographs; to Mrs. Mary S. Logan (widow of General John A. Logan), for personal recollections of Colonel Ingersoll's father, Rev. John Ingersoll, in Marion, Ill., and of Colonel Ingersoll's early life and associates in Marion, Shawneetown, and Peoria; to Miss Susan Hayes Ward (author of *The History of the Broadway Tabernacle Church*), who has helped to trace the record of Rev. Mr. Ingersoll's pastoral work in New York City; to Mrs. Carrie Robertson Kepler and Mr. William Ward Smith, both of Ashtabula, O., for facts and anecdotes pertaining to Rev. Mr. Ingersoll's life, and to Colonel Ingersoll's boyhood, in that town; to Colonel Clark E. Carr, for quotations from *The Illini* and *My Day and Generation*,

and for other personal reminiscences of his life-long friend; to the late Mr. Eugene M. Macdonald, editor of *The Truth Seeker*, and author of *Ingersoll As He Is*, for excerpts from those publications; to Mr. W. A. Kelsoe, of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, who has collected many facts concerning Colonel Ingersoll's youth, and the life of his father, in Greenville, Ill.; to Rev. James H. McKee, pastor of the Congregational Church, Westmoreland, N. Y., for extracts from the historical records of that church, relative to the ministerial services of Colonel Ingersoll's father; to the late Mr. Charles Carroll, of Shawneetown, for personal recollections of Colonel Ingersoll's early days in that place, and in Greenville, Metropolis, and Marion; to the Adjutant-General of the army, who has supplied, from the files of his office, such details of Colonel Ingersoll's military service as could not be obtained from the published *Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, nor elsewhere; to Brigadier-General Thomas W. Scott, adjutant-general of Illinois, who has generously loaned for my perusal his only copy of the official history of Colonel Ingersoll's regiment; to the employees of the Library of Congress, who, with their wonted courtesy, have afforded me facilities for research—to these, each and all, and to many less fruitful sources, I am grateful for assistance in at least approximating the absolute accuracy of date, in-

cident, and narrative that has been a constant aim in the purely biographical pages of this work.

As to the other pages,—those of critical "study" and "appreciation,"—I am happily able to realize that which Huxley regarded as "the most sacred act of a man's life," namely, "to say and to feel, 'I believe such and such to be true.'"

HERMAN E. KITTREDGE.

WASHINGTON, D. C., May, 1910.

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CHAPTER I.

FROM EIGHTEEN THIRTY-THREE TO EIGHTEEN FORTY

ENGLAND has her Stratford, Scotland has her Alloway, and America, too, has her Dresden. For there, on August 11, 1833, was born the greatest and noblest of the Western World; an immense personality,—unique, lovable, sublime; the peerless orator of all time, and as true a poet as Nature ever held in tender clasp upon her loving breast, and, in words coined for the chosen few, told of the joys and sorrows, hopes, dreams, and fears of universal life; a patriot whose golden words and deathless deeds were worthy of the Great Republic; a philanthropist, real and genuine; a philosopher whose central theme was human love,—who placed "the holy hearth of home" higher than the altar of any god; an iconoclast, a builder—a reformer, perfectly poised, absolutely honest, and as fearless as truth itself—the most aggressive and formidable foe of superstition —the most valiant champion of reason—Robert G. Ingersoll.

Dresden, Torrey Township, Yates County, N. Y.,

lies a tranquil village on the western shore of Seneca Lake. Passing over its history, which would take us back to the stirring days of redskin and Tory,—to "old, unhappy far-off things, and battles long ago,"—we may note that it is a hamlet typical of the hundreds which have gradually arisen from the modest wants and necessities of rural New York and New England.

In this handful of buildings with a classic name, there is little to recall the splendor of the Saxon city. No palace "of rare and nameless marble" tells of imperial grandeur; and in no church or gallery has any master left his wealth of art. Its finest street would never remind one of the Schloss or the Prager; and through its midst no Elbe flows dreamful of the sea. Indeed, there is nothing, either within or around, which would lead one oblivious of its name to associate the Dresden of the American lake with the Dresden of the German river, nor to suspect that it was entitled to a special place in the memory of mankind—nothing in its embellishments, its environment, its quiet atmosphere, to suggest the origin of him whose unheralded coming was destined to transform a humble hamlet into a shrine for many millions of the human race. As at Stratford there is nothing outward to indicate the source of that "intellectual ocean whose waves touched all the shores of thought"; as at Alloway no muse or goddess stands ready to tell why the world will forever keep

Birthplace of Ingersoll, Dresden, N. Y.
The two right-hand upper windows indicate the room in which he was born. From a painting by James Verrier, after a photograph.

green with its tears "the banks and braes o' bonnie Doon"; as in the "woods of Kentucky" no century-storied rock reveals the secret of him who broke the shackles of a race and preserved the sublime unity of a nation: so at Dresden,—that veriest misnomer,—there is naught to account for him who possessed at once the language of Shakespeare, the tenderness of Burns, the justice and wisdom of Lincoln—the genius, the goodness, the heroism, to strike the mental manacles from millions of his fellows and create an epoch in intellectual progress.

§ 2.

Ingersoll himself has said, that "great men have been belittled by biography." He might have added, that great biographies have been belittled by genealogy. Why? Because, in the present state of knowledge, the utmost possibility of genealogy, namely, the establishment of heredity, is irrelevant in biography, the story of a life. Primarily, biography deals with the *what* and the *how*. The *why*, that is, the inherent causes of the phenomena produced,—the secret of genius,—belongs in the province of natural science,—of anatomy, physiology, and histology,—of pathology, physiological chemistry, and psychology.

By proving that a man resembled his mother, what do we accomplish? We prove that she resembled him. We merely add to the evidence for

heredity. If we are to demonstrate the real origin,—the ultimate cause,—of his genius, we must next show why she was as she was. It will not do to say that he was metaphysical because she was Scotch, nor that he was witty because she was Irish. Maybe the Scotch are sometimes witty. So the question still is, *Why* was she metaphysical? or *Why* was she witty? And until we are able to answer such questions, our dealings with genealogy cannot rise in importance and dignity above mere curiosity.

Why is it, that, while a vast majority of mankind merely vegetate,—manifest only so much mental power as is requisite to provide for the gratification of their physical appetites,—there occurs, once in a few hundred years, such a combination of the elements as to produce a Shakespeare, a Burns, a Lincoln, or an Ingersoll? We do not know; and if we could demonstrate that the ancestors of such men are invariably great, we should still be in darkness. In the undiscovered vaults of being, nature has locked the secret of genius, and into the Styx of human ignorance has she cast the key.

Beyond the fact that the brain is the exclusive organ of mind, we can scarcely go with certain step. Of the exact origin of thought, or even of consciousness, we have no knowledge. All that we positively know, can be told in few words. We know that the brain of the average adult male (Caucasian) weighs

about forty-nine and one-half ounces; that, usually, a brain weighing from twenty-three to thirty-four ounces belongs to a very inferior person; that a brain weighing less than twenty-three ounces belongs to an idiot; and that, usually, a brain weighing sixty-five ounces or more belongs either to a very wise man or to a fool. Perhaps we may be somewhat more definite and say, that, between the two extremes of normality (thirty-four ounces and sixty-five ounces), the manifestations of a brain depend upon its form, the number and the depth of its convolutions and sulci, and, probably above all, upon its chemical composition. But the physicochemical constitution that is essential to any particular form or degree of genius, or, indeed, to mediocrity, is unknown.

There is cause to believe, that an exact knowledge of the latter will some day be acquired and reduced to intelligible terms. Then, may genealogy reasonably occupy a conspicuous place in biography. Meantime, it seems that, in telling the story of a life, we should concern ourselves chiefly with what the subject did, and how he did it.

Ingersoll himself clearly recognized the present futility of attempting to account for genius with a tedious list of ancestral names. Without denying that genius is the necessary and inevitable fruit of the ancestral tree, he saw that the fruit was, to say the least, no more mysterious than the tree itself; and he felt the uselessness of trying "to account

for one mystery by another." This explains his indifference to genealogy when he said, that he knew as much of his ancestors as they did of him; and it is in harmony with the following extracts from his lecture on Shakespeare:—

"It has been said that a man of genius should select his ancestors with great care—and yet there does not seem to be as much in heredity as most people think. The children of the great are often small. Pigmies are born in palaces, while over the children of genius is the roof of straw. Most of the great are like mountains, with the valley of ancestors on one side and the depression of posterity on the other." (iii 7)[1]

"We account for this man as we do for the highest mountain, the greatest river, the most perfect gem. We can only say: He was." (iii 17)

§ 3.

But while the several reasons indicated in these quotations and the paragraph preceding them must be accepted as the basis of his belief in the futility of endeavoring, in the traditional way, to discover the secret of genius in general, and of that of Shakespeare in particular, they afford no explanation of his lack of interest in a personal biography, nor of his decided aversion to autobiography. We must look further for an explanation of the regrettable fact, that, after one of the most eventful and important lives of the nineteenth century was "rounded with a sleep," the world was not vouchsafed the privilege of perusing, with the additional

[1] All references, in this form, are to volume and page of *The Works of Robert G. Ingersoll, Dresden Edition.*

pleasure born of the assurance of perfect intimacy, candor, and authenticity, the most instructive and inspiring of stories. But such explanation is by no means hard to find. Indeed, it is instantly apparent to all who are familiar with the personality of Ingersoll. It stands out, with a clearness that almost transcends modesty itself, in that inherent modesty of true greatness which was his, and in a serene, abiding content to be known through his works alone. We need no stronger proof of this than is contained in his invariable oral reply, "No biography," to writers, who frequently besought him for personal data, and in a private letter answering a communication in which the present author had inclosed, for authorization, the manuscript of an article of a biographical and complimentary nature. Aside from the contents of the letter itself, from which I quote, its date, August 19, 1898, clearly indicates how great was its writer's indifference to biography and contemporary praise; the author's communication, written in the early spring, evidently not having awakened sufficient interest to prevent its being mislaid for some three months:—

"Do not trouble yourself about this business. It will all come out right at last. Of course, I am greatly obliged to you. At the same time, I know how far I fall short."

And an examination of his posthumous "Fragments" shows that he had already written (ten years previously) the following lines:—

"I have never given to any one a sketch of my life. According to my idea a life should not be written until it has been lived." (xii 358)[1]

§ 4.

As perhaps a majority of geniuses belonging to families of more than two children were either the oldest or the youngest of those families, it may or may not be interesting to note that Robert G. Ingersoll was the youngest of five,—two sisters and three brothers; but it certainly is interesting, and amusing as well, that fate, with wonted irony, should decree that his father was to be an orthodox preacher, and that a part of his own name was to be borrowed from another preacher,—Rev. Beriah Green.

Rev. John Ingersoll, upon whom destiny bestowed by far the greater of these honors,—the greatest that was ever bestowed upon a clergyman,—was born at Pittsford, Rutland County, Vt., on July 5, 1792, his parents being Ebenezer and Margaret (Whitcomb) Ingersoll, both of English descent. He graduated from Middlebury College (then and still non-denominational), Middlebury, Vt., with the degree of bachelor of arts, in 1821. On September 25th of that year, at Ogdensburg, N. Y., he married Miss Mary Livingston. Having

[1] In a letter to Mr. Charles Carroll, Shawneetown, Ill., these sentiments are reiterated: "I know but little about my ancestors,—not much more than they do about me. * * * Please request your friend not to write any memoirs of me. The life of a man should not be written until he has lived it."

studied theology with Rev. Josiah Hopkins, D.D., New Haven, Vt., he was ordained a Congregational preacher, in 1823, and was pastor of the Congregational Church at Pittsford from that year until 1826.

In addition to the education and culture ordinarily implied by the regular collegiate and the private theological studies above indicated, Rev. John Ingersoll possessed superior native endowments, and was most proficient in Hebrew, and in the Greek and the Latin classics. Moreover, he was an extensive reader,—withal a man of wide and profound learning.

However, that he was, in the beginning of his ministerial career, as absolutely orthodox, in spite of all his learning, as Jonathan Edwards, for example, had been in spite of his, is certain. That he was intellectually hospitable in his later years is equally certain. "He was grand enough," writes Robert, "to say to me, that I had the same right to my opinion that he had to his. He was great enough to tell me to read the Bible for myself, to be honest with myself, and if after reading it I concluded it was not the word of God, that it was my duty to say so." (v 148) We have another statement by Robert, that, for many years, he and his father were wont to discuss with each other the questions in which both were so profoundly interested, and that, "long before" the father's death, the latter utterly gave up, "as unworthy of

a place in the mind of an intelligent man, the infamous dogma of eternal fire; that he regarded with abhorrence many passages in the Old Testament; that he believed man, in another world, would have the eternal opportunity of doing right, and that the pity of God would last as long as the suffering of man." (v 149). Even more significant is the fact that, on his death-bed, the father requested Robert to read to him, not the Hebrew nor the Christian Scriptures, but pagan Plato on immortality.

It has been widely stated, and perhaps as widely believed, that Rev. Mr. Ingersoll was harsh and tyrannical, particularly in his domestic relations, and that it was this circumstance which caused his gifted son to rebel against the faith. On this point, I quote, as far as pertinent, a letter from Robert to a friend :—

"The story that the unkindness of my father drove me into Infidelity is simply an orthodox lie. The bigots, unable to meet my arguments, are endeavoring to dig open the grave and calumniate the dead. This they are willing to do in defense of their infamous dogmas. * * * My father was a kind and loving man. He loved his children tenderly and intensely. There was no sacrifice he would not and did not gladly make for them. He had one misfortune, and that was his religion. He believed the Bible, and in the shadow of that frightful book he passed his life. He believed in the truth of its horrors, and for years, thinking of the fate of the human race, his eyes were filled with tears. * * * My father was infinitely better than * * * the religion he preached. And these stories about his unkindness are maliciously untrue. * * *"[1]

[1] *Col. Robert G. Ingersoll As He Is*, by E. M. Macdonald, p. 58.

And elsewhere:—

"He was a good, a brave and honest man. I loved him living, and I love him dead. I never said to him an unkind word, and in my heart there never was of him an unkind thought." (v 148)

However, it is admitted that, with all his excellent qualities, Rev. Mr. Ingersoll, like so many other parents of his generation, was unduly exacting; that he adhered too literally to the biblical injunction concerning rod and child. There is good evidence that this attitude, doubtless always unjustifiable, was particularly so in the case of Robert. That the youngster in whom maturity found a sense of humor and a command of wit and raillery which would have obliged the Reverend Ingersoll himself to laugh at the Mosaic cosmology (even while he proclaimed its divinity!), was aglow with life, and given to fun and pranks, there is no doubt. But there certainly was nothing wanton or perverse in Robert Ingersoll the boy. There were the same good heart and the same great candor with which Robert Ingersoll the man appealed, as by irresistible magic, to the goodness and the candor in others. To his playmates, the boy was known as "Honest Bob"; and the fitness of the epithet his father at length came to recognize. Some of the ever-dutiful (numerous enough in every age and community!) were wont to inform the clergyman of the doings and sayings of his iconoclastic son. Confronted with charges,

Robert would enter a demurrer; but the clergyman's faith in his informants was sufficiently strong, for a time at least, to bring the proverbial rod into immediate requisition. Afterwards, he would discover that Robert had told the truth,—just as many another clergyman has since discovered. The effect of these chastisements was anything but good. With most boys, it might, perhaps, have been at least indifferent. But the mere thought that an own parent could inflict him with physical suffering, whether or not, in common parlance, he "deserved" it, was itself a greater punishment than should have been imposed upon the uncommonly sensitive and affectionate nature of Robert Ingersoll. Nevertheless, the clergyman's parental love (no doubt reciprocated by the rest of his children also) was, as already shown, returned in generous measure by Robert; and when, on Sunday May 1, 1859, at Peoria, Rev. Mr. Ingersoll breathed his last, at the home of another son, it was in the arms of the future's "Great Agnostic."

Robert G. Ingersoll's mother, Mary Livingston Ingersoll, was born at Lisbon, St. Lawrence County, N. Y., on November 9, 1799. Her parents were Judge Robert Livingston and Agnes Oceanica (Adams) Livingston. The former was of the noted colonial family from which Livingston Manor, Livingston County, etc., derived their names. To this family belonged Philip Livingston, who was one

of the signers of the Declaration, and Robert R. Livingston, who was one of the committee of five appointed to draft that document, and who, as chancellor of the State of New York, administered the oath to Washington as the first president of the United States.

If Robert G. Ingersoll resembled any of his ancestors, either direct or collateral, it was Edward Livingston, the jurist, statesman, and philanthropist. At any rate, it is interesting to note, at this late day, the opinion of one who was competent to pass judgment on such a matter, and who had observed both Livingston and Ingersoll. John Church Hamilton, the biographer and historian (a son of Alexander Hamilton), once came upon the platform, at the conclusion of a lecture by Ingersoll, and, in the course of the ensuing conversation, assured the latter of the resemblance just mentioned. At this the orator was by no means displeased, since the ancestor referred to was one (and the only Livingston) for whom he entertained high admiration. He was always inclined to believe that it was from her mother, Agnes Oceanica (Adams) Livingston, that his own mother chiefly derived her noble qualities.

Be the latter as it may, we are bound to record here, if we attach anything like normal credence to the many statements concerning her character and attributes, that Mary Livingston Ingersoll was one of the greatest and most charming of women.

For it is said that her intellect was exalted, that her sympathies were wide and profound, that her love of liberty was intense. Of the latter, there is ample evidence in the fact that, shortly before the birth of Robert, she prepared and circulated, in the state of New York, a petition to the Federal Congress, praying that slavery in the District of Columbia be abolished. It is claimed that this petition was the first of its kind to be prepared in America by a woman.

We are therefore inclined, after all, to think that fate was not, as we supposed, the sole arbiter in the decision that the middle name of the epoch-making babe should begin with "G"; for Rev. Beriah Green was an "uncompromising abolitionist." But whether our supposition was correct or not, we do know that fate soon proved to be as inexorably cruel in this case as she had been ironical in it, or in any other; for Mary Livingston Ingersoll, at Cazenovia, Madison County, N. Y., on December 2, 1835,—scarcely more than two years after the decision mentioned,—passed into the great shadow, not with the proud memories which might have been hers, but with only a mother's dream of her marvelous child.—

"Nearly forty-eight years ago, under the snow, in the little town of Cazenovia, my poor mother was buried. I was but two years old. I remember her as she looked in death. That sweet, cold face has kept my heart warm through all the changing years." (xii 328) [1]

[1] From a letter of condolence written to a friend on the death of his mother.

§ 5.

After the death of the wife and mother, the life of Rev. Mr. Ingersoll and family was destined to run, as indeed it had already run,—even before the birth of Robert,—a shifting and precarious course. For, orthodox though this clergyman was, especially in his earlier days,—heartily though he favored mental slavery,—he was as strongly opposed to physical slavery as were even his wife and Rev. Beriah Green; and as he had "the courage of his convictions," he was continually at odds with the pro-slavery element of the church. Furthermore, he was, by native aptitude and acquired reputation, an evangelist. Under those conditions, it was of course inevitable that his "calls" should be many and near between.

In endeavoring to trace the resulting career, one is only too often reminded of the statement of Robert, that 'history, for the most part, is a detailed account of things that never occurred.' And one is finally forced to ask: If so little can be positively ascertained about a Christian clergyman who lived and labored extensively during the middle decades of the nineteenth century, and who, moreover, was the father of one of the most widely known men of that century, how much of the history of individuals and events antedating by hundreds and thousands of years the invention of printing, was made by the historians themselves?

How much of it consists, indeed, of "a detailed account of things that never occurred"? (iv 50) But in the case of Rev. Mr. Ingersoll, there is very meager "account" of any sort. This, however, is easily explained. The Congregational denomination, of which he was a minister, had fewer organizations than the Presbyterian (particularly in rural communities); and, consequently, he was often obliged to accept "calls," more or less temporary, from Presbyterian churches. The services incident to such calls, being performed by one who had not been regularly "received" into the presbyteries concerned, were not recorded by the latter, nor in the minutes of the annual general assemblies. If the local churches, or societies, themselves kept any written records, such records have been, in many cases, destroyed by fire, mislaid, or otherwise rendered unavailable. The same is true of the Congregational churches, or societies, that he served, whether permanently as pastor, or temporarily as evangelist. Despite these difficulties, however, we shall be able, by means of the following outline, prepared after diligent research and extensive correspondence, to realize how shifting and precarious, as already hinted, was his career and, consequently, the childhood of him who, while perpetuating the name, was so totally to eclipse the abilities, of the father.

From some unknown date in 1831, until the

spring of 1833, Rev. Mr. Ingersoll was pastor of a Congregational church at Hanover, then in the town of Marshall, now in the town of Deansboro, Oneida County, N. Y. There, in a house (and room) still pointed out, was born, on December 12, 1831, his second son, Ebenezer Clark ("Ebon" or "Clark," as he was familiarly called), who became a Republican representative in Congress, from Illinois, in 1864, succeeding Owen Lovejoy, deceased, and being thrice reëlected.

From Hanover Rev. Mr. Ingersoll removed to Pompey, in Onondaga County. Remaining only a month or so, he was called to what is now Dresden, Torrey Township, Yates County, where, on August 11th, as already stated, Robert first saw the light. The village was then known as West Dresden. There the father was pastor of the Presbyterian Church; also of the Presbyterian Church at Bellona, both West Dresden and Bellona then being in the same town, Benton.

After a stay of scarcely six months, or about three months subsequent to Robert's birth, the clergyman again obeyed the familiar summons. Whence it came cannot be positively stated; but on the 2d of the following April (1834), he was installed as associate pastor of the Second Free (Presbyterian) Church, New York City.

Rev. Charles G. Finney had been the regular pastor since September 28th (or October 5), 1832, but at the time of Rev. Mr. Ingersoll's installa-

tion, the former was on a voyage to the Mediterranean, for his health. This church, which was organized on Tuesday February 14, 1832, with forty-one members, mostly colonists from the First Free (Presbyterian) Church, had, as its first place of worship, Broadway Hall, just above Canal Street. It soon leased and fitted up, for its exclusive use, at a subscribed outlay of about $10,000, the Chatham Street Theater, which, on April 23, 1832, was dedicated as Chatham Street Chapel ("Chatham Chapel"). It was there that Robert G. Ingersoll was baptized, by his father, probably in 1834. Six years later this Second Free (Presbyterian) Church had evolved into the present Broadway Tabernacle (Congregational) Church. Rev. Mr. Finney returned from abroad and resumed his duties late in October, or early in November, 1834; but Rev. Mr. Ingersoll continued as associate pastor, or co-pastor, until February 4, 1835, when he resigned.

To what place he removed cannot be positively stated; but he probably went directly to Cazenovia, in Madison County, where, in the year last mentioned, he was pastor of the Congregational Free Church, and where, on December 2d of the same year, as we have already seen, the wife and mother died.

It is interesting that the church at Cazenovia, which was organized about two years previously, by revolting members of the Presbyterian church, stood

especially for a free pew, and for a free platform to any one who desired to speak on moral questions. It advocated temperance and the abolition of slavery.

From Cazenovia, in February, 1836, Rev. Mr. Ingersoll was again called to Oneida County, this time on special evangelistic service with the Congregational church at Hampton (now Westmoreland). While a revival was in progress, the regular pastor withdrew, Rev. Mr. Ingersoll remaining as "stated supply," from March, 1836, until March, 1838.

In the following year, he was preaching to the Presbyterians of Belleville, in Jefferson County.

He had moved again by 1840, being a resident of Oberlin, O. He does not seem to have been regularly connected with any church, but to have preached occasionally in Oberlin and adjacent places.

From Oberlin he removed, in 1841, to Ashtabula, succeeding Rev. Robert H. Conklin as pastor of the Presbyterian Church, and supplying the pulpit at Saybrook. The house which he occupied in Ashtabula is still pointed out, at No. 242 Main Street, as one of the landmarks of the city, it having been for sixty-three years in the possession of Mr. John P. Robertson and family. Mr. Robertson was one of the trustees of the church, took part, as such, in engaging Rev. Mr. Ingersoll, and taught the Sunday-school class, Robert Ingersoll being among the pupils.

After a residence of about one year in Ashtabula, Rev. Mr. Ingersoll removed to North Madison, to become pastor of what is now the First Congregational Church, which was founded in 1819, and which was called the "Bell Church," because it was the first in the township of Madison to possess a bell. Having served "two years or more," at a salary of two hundred dollars a year, he transferred his pulpit elsewhere, probably to Illinois.

In 1851 he went to Greenville, in Bond County, as pastor ("stated supply") of the Congregational Church, remaining about a year.

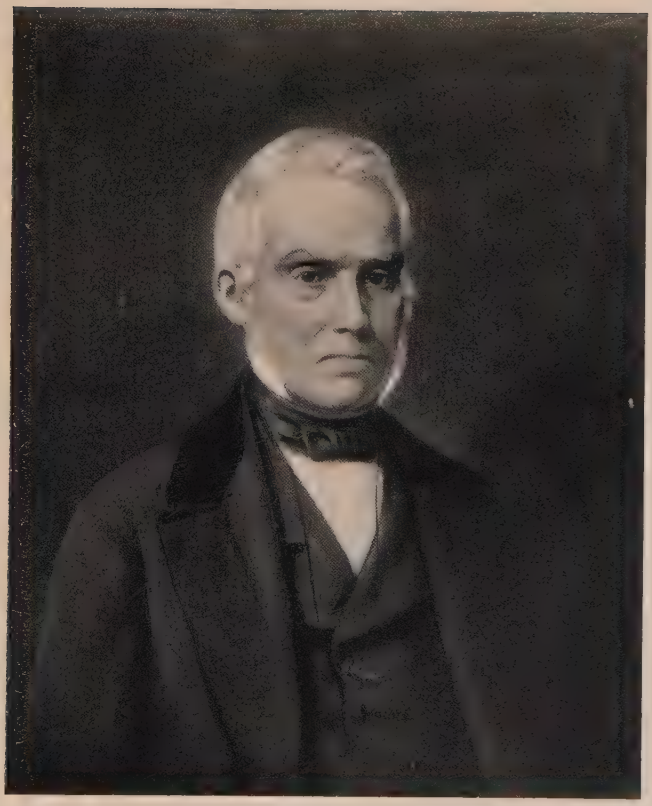
From Greenville he removed to Marion, William son County, where, during 1853 and '54, he was pastor ("stated supply") of the Presbyterian Church, preaching also at Mount Vernon and Benton.

In 1855, four years before his death, he was residing at Belleville, St. Clair County, "without charge."

During his ministerial career, he preached also in Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana, and Kentucky, and possibly at some other points in Vermont, New York, Ohio, and Illinois; but the itinerary thus far given is sufficient for the purpose indicated in the beginning of this section.

§ 6.

Not the least interesting fact concerning the



Rev. John Ingersoll.
From a painting by Henry Ulke, after a daguerreotype.

father of Robert G. Ingersoll was his facial resemblance to one who, in most things, was doubtless his exact opposite. Call to the mind's eye a characteristic portrait of Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, extinguish the spark of humor with the "sinfulness" of joy, weight down the curves with "foreordination," and you have a close likeness of Rev. John Ingersoll. That the latter, however, would have consented to be seen through the features of another, no matter how distinguished, is quite unthinkable. Indeed, carefully weighing the preceding personal history and the testimony of relatives, friends, hosts, and converts who came into close relations with him, we are able to synthesize a very distinct individuality. That he was an individuality—that you would have had to count him as a separate and sovereign unit in taking a census of the universe—there is no doubt. He was always himself—dignified, reticent, austere. People,—young people in particular,—"looked up" to "Doctor" Ingersoll. He was regarded as a learned man. Exceedingly pious and devout, even for a clergyman, he spent an unusual amount of time in prayer, and insisted on keeping the Sabbath in the strictest orthodox way. He was very abstemious, following, at least for many years, the diet of the Grahamites, and always strongly condemning the use of liquor and tobacco.

He was a zealous and outspoken abolitionist. His experiences in New York City, in 1834, when

abolition-leaders and clergymen of anti-slavery sentiment were subjected to mob-violence, did not dampen his ardor nor bridle his tongue. He would never allow anything derogatory of the negro to be uttered in his presence.

He was a man with strong convictions, and he spoke them fearlessly, whether as friend, as citizen, or as pastor.

As a preacher, he was earnest, eloquent, impressive. Many whom he converted remained so until they heard his son; then they paid substantially the following tribute to the powers of both: "Your father *gave* me religion, and now you have taken it away." Surviving members of Rev. Mr. Ingersoll's congregations recall his "restlessness" in the pulpit, or rather, perhaps, around it; for often, in hermeneutic fervor, he would leave the pulpit, stepping down in front and pacing alternately to the right and the left, and sometimes even walking down an aisle. Now and then he would suddenly pause and "look right at you."

At Hanover (Deansboro), N. Y., he established the reputation of "an eloquent and masterful preacher, with great personal magnetism,—stirring his audience to the depths." One of his converts once said: "When I went to hear 'Priest Ingersoll' [as he was there called], I could scarcely take time to eat my dinner. I knew my soul was in jeopardy, and, fearing lest I lose one moment, I

ran all the way back. He made salvation seem so plain, so easy, I wanted to take it to my heart without delay." He is also said to have possessed great physical endurance, sometimes preaching from morning until nearly sunset, with only a brief intermission.

The records of the Congregational Church at Westmoreland, N. Y., fortunately afford what probably may be safely accepted as a view of his average ministerial work and environment. After setting forth that he came to the church as an evangelist, and that while his meetings were in progress the regular pastor withdrew, the records continue :—

" The meetings were in no way interrupted, Mr. Ingersoll assuming entire control; and on the 26th of the same month (February) there were added to the church, on profession of faith, about thirty members. About the same time, new and considerably modified articles of faith were adopted. Mr. Ingersoll continued to occupy the pulpit as stated supply. He was an able and attractive preacher, his audience never tiring on account of long sermons, to which he was not a little liable. His forte was doubtless as an evangelist. Few men can read character with the accuracy that he did. * * * It was during his ministry that the church was called upon to meet the widespread craze of perfectionism, which it did effectually. This was the theory that Christ was in its subjects in such a way that they could not sin, which constituted a fundamental principle in Oneida communism, where it was permitted thoroughly and nauseatingly to expend itself. During the time Mr. Ingersoll was with the church, the subject of slavery was seriously agitated, resulting in its condemnation, without any *per se* proviso."

There is equally interesting evidence that, as a clergyman, Rev. Mr. Ingersoll, in at least one

respect, was far ahead of his time—that, even in the early forties, he was an occasional exemplar of what is now termed "muscular Christianity." While residing at North Madison, O., knowledge of his earlier feats as a wrestler became current. A mile or so from the place lived a notorious wrestler weighing about two hundred and twenty-five pounds. One day, by a mischievous pre-arrangement of the village boys, the two men met, and, after some talk, engaged in a wrestling bout. The clergyman was victorious! The saints were scandalized; they demanded an apology from their pastor. On the following Sunday he complied, in substantially these words: "Dear friends, I was tempted to wrestle this man, which was not becoming in a minister; but I threw him in less than a minute." This closed the incident.

The physical prowess of Rev. Mr. Ingersoll was doubtless reflected in the heroic presence of his youngest son.

CHAPTER II.

FROM EIGHTEEN FORTY-ONE TO EIGHTEEN FIFTY-SEVEN

OF HIS boyhood, Ingersoll seldom spoke: it was a subject too reminiscent of struggle and hardship,—of unutterable sorrow. But the story of a man necessarily involves, to some extent, the story of a boy; and the right to peruse the story of the man here concerned was long since included among those rights inalienable to the human race.

It is in Ashtabula, as a town of scarcely a thousand souls, in the old Western Reserve, that we get the first definite impressions of the "mischievous" boy who was so human that people insisted, then and ever after, upon calling him by only half of his first name, sometimes making up the loss of letters with an endearing epithet,—"Our 'Bob.'"

Robert is eight years old, has a stepmother, and is obliged to be promptly on hand every Sunday, for the catechism-class and a sermon or two, in his father's church. But there are six more days in the week; and as neither a stepmother nor a

catechist nor a preacher is ubiquitous, even in a village, we hear of sundry doings, here and there, by a youngster whose face is not always clean, whose shoes (when he wears any) do not invariably "shine"—of leap-frog in the telltale sawdust of the circus-ring—of miscellaneous noises issuing from the old tannery—of fire-crackers going off where they shouldn't.

Be it noted, however, that, "whatever prank 'Bob' might be up to, there was never any meanness in it." Thus commented the aforementioned catechist, Mr. Robertson, in later life, and from the best of first-hand knowledge; for, aside from being the boy's Sunday-school teacher, and a trustee in Rev. Mr. Ingersoll's church, he kept a store, where Robert, in whom he took a personal interest, and who was in and out from day to day, "often had his pockets filled with nuts and raisins" by the proprietor.

The latter's testimonial to the boy's essential integrity is most interestingly confirmed by others. For example, the late Samuel W. Wetmore, M.D., of Buffalo, N. Y., writing in 1899, said:—

"More than fifty years ago I learned to love him for his honesty, truthfulness, integrity, sincerity, and noble nature." "We were boys together in Ashtabula, O. We went to school and church together, played, fished, and hunted together * * * ." "I think I had the honor of first calling him 'Honest Bob'; and by that cognomen he was afterward recognized by his boy associates. Life seemed to burst out on the face of that boy with all the effulgence that intelligence and goodness could portray in a noble character. * * *"

All of which affords the impression of a "mischievous" boy who, to say the least, was also a good boy.

From a surviving member of Mr. Robertson's Sunday-school class, we learn that Robert "was a very apt scholar, well up in the lesson." At the "academy," which he attended less than a year, he seems to have been equally "apt," Dr. Wetmore stating: "Although I was a year older than he, I was never his peer as a scholar." And this, it will be seen, completes our impression—a "mischievous" good boy who was also a bright boy.

A letter written in the "back parlor" in which, sixty-nine years ago, Rev. Mr. Ingersoll held the week-night prayer-meetings of his church affords some interesting reminiscences of Robert,—reminiscences fully verified by more intimate authority.

The pastor took much pride in the carefully cultivated garden and the well-kept lawn comprised in the lot on which stood his residence, and had given Robert imperative instructions to keep them entire and inviolate from the depredations of marauding live stock, even though the latter should take the familiar form of a cow belonging to the teacher of the Sunday-school in Rev. Mr. Ingersoll's church. In the fullness of time, the cow appeared,—wearing a nimbus of cauliflower and cabbage! The boy's efforts to eject her, through the gateway of the fence that surrounded the entire lot, merely resulted in her veering off in some

other direction. But he persisted; and, as Shelley describes it, 'the sinuous path of lawn and of moss led through the garden along and across,' until, suddenly, at the extreme rear of the lot, the cow slipped, sprawled, and disappeared!—Robert reaching the immediate scene of apparent dematerialization just in time to see her rolling over and over down an eighty-foot embankment toward the Ashtabula River! Never, he often remarked in later years, should he forget his feelings as he watched that rotating cow, nor when, on hurrying breathlessly to the foot of the bank, he saw her upon her feet, placidly chewing a wisp of grass!

Our next incident is of interest, not only because of Robert's later achievements as an orator, but as indicating, in a touching way, how closely dependent upon each other, in childish affection, were he and his brother "Clark." At an entertainment, in the Baptist Church, Robert was to "speak a piece" that he had thoroughly learned at school—"I Remember, I Remember," by Thomas Hood:—

"I remember, I remember,
The house where I was born,
The little window where the sun
Came peeping in at morn;
He never came a wink too soon,
Nor brought too long a day,
But now, I often wish the night
Had borne my breath away!

"I remember, I remember,"——

But Robert didn't "remember"—he didn't remember a word after he made his bow. So he started for his seat. No sooner did he reach it than the poem came back to his mind; and he returned to the stage. But with his second bow he forgot it all again! Then, with a confidence in the vicarious that he never afterwards indulged,—a confidence born of childish affection and innocence,—he said, marching off the stage: "'Clark' knows it."

Passing over the succeeding decade, our next view of Robert is in Greenville, where, in 1851, his father had shortly preceded him. The fact that he was then a youth of seventeen, and that the Ingersolls, no longer keeping house, boarded and "roomed," for varying periods, in several separate families, render it natural that many of the older and former residents of the place should still have of him some distinct recollections. A careful summary of the latter, results in no striking transformation of the Ashtabula impression; in fact, in no transformation, other than would very naturally come with the added years. It is a phenomenon of normal development. The "mischievous" good bright boy has simply become a youth whose "mischief" is less evident; who, if he does smoke cigars (but never a pipe!), is still good, perhaps better; and who, moreover, is "*extraordinarily* bright for one of his age."

His quickness at learning is remarked by a

prominent resident of Greenville who was his seatmate, for six months, in 1851. According to the gentleman mentioned, Robert passed his school-hours not in over-zealous attention to books,—sometimes even amusing himself by throwing "paper wads"; "and then when recitation came, he would beat any of us"! This habit of throwing "paper wads" and beating people at "recitation" never left him! His "wads" and "recitations" were of very fine texture and quality in later life!

The school which he attended in Greenville, like that in Ashtabula, was called an "academy." It was a private subscription school conducted by Mr. Socrates Smith, in the basement of the Congregational Church, of which Rev. Mr. Ingersoll was pastor.

As a companion, Robert was "very magnetic and fascinating." He excelled as a story-teller, and was brilliant in general conversation. His diction was admirable. Whether speaking or writing, he chose the "inevitable" word or phrase, showing withal a predilection for figurative expression. He was an extensive reader, especially of the finer and more artistic classes of literature. Familiar with all the poets, he was particularly fond of Burns and Byron. Burns he would quote "by the hour."

It was in Greenville that the Muse paid to Robert himself what was perhaps her first visitation. In a poem of twelve stanzas, dated "Green-

ville, April 15," signed "R. G. I.," and printed in the Greenville *Journal*, in June, 1852, he thus (in part) apostrophizes "The Wavy West":—

* * * * * * *

"Thou glorious world of bloom,
Where bending flowers gently blow
And o'er thy breast their leaflets throw
In beauty's soft perfume;

* * * * * * *

"Where dark-haired Indian girls,
Reclining on thy dewy breast,
In morning dew and sunlight dressed,
Adorned with dewy pearls,

"First felt the tender flame,
Saw lovers' lips in rapture move
And felt the trembling beat of love
Thrill wildly o'er their frame."

* * * * * * *

In the ninth stanza is a quotation from *The Cotter's Saturday Night*:—

"But now upon thy breast
'The lowly cot appears in view,'" etc.—

an interesting proof of how deeply he had taken to heart the noble lyrics of the "ploughman poet."

But the most precious of the recollections of Robert's Greenville acquaintances involves his regard for the memory of his mother. They tell of a lock of hair which, accidentally separated from

his personal belongings, and subsequently discovered by an associate, was identified by Robert in terms of tenderest affection. We can therefore believe, that, with the following lines, which he was then wont to repeat, came thoughts of far-off Cazenovia:—

> "Oft in the stilly night,
> Ere slumber's chains have bound me,
> Fond memory brings the light
> Of other days around me."

For, thirty years later, did he not write?—

> "My mother died when I was but a child; and from that day—the darkest of my life—her memory has been within my heart a sacred 'thing, and I have felt, through all these years, her kisses on my lips.' (v 148)

§ 2.

If we reflect upon the itinerancy indicated in preceding pages, and, especially, if we contrast the educational advantages of the rural communities of the time with the scholastic abilities of Rev. Mr. Ingersoll, we shall not be surprised to learn that Robert,—the "Great Agnostic" to be,—received most of his early instruction from a certain orthodox clergyman. The latter assistance, with the meager help obtained at school, evidently was ample for one of Robert's mental tendency and habits. For, during boyhood and early youth, he read nearly everything (judging by the statements of his associates, as already indicated, and by the

titles he himself has given) that was considered standard in moral, religious, and theological literature, as well as such works of fiction and poetry as were regarded as "safe" for the young. Subsequently, although he never pursued an academic nor a collegiate course of any kind,—"never knelt to the professor," as he said of Shakespeare,—he devoured with avidity everything that was really great in fiction and poetry not only, but in history, philosophy, and science. As the bee is to the world of flowers, so became Ingersoll to the world of literature, with this exception, that none of the honey which the latter gathered could be taken from him. To change the figure, any striking fact, any beautiful thought, once passed "the warder of the brain" remained forever his cherished captive.

Pausing in retrospective comparison of his native endowments and his acquired mental wealth with those of the average pedagogue of his youth, we are strongly inclined to envy certain pupils of Metropolis, Massac County, Ill.; for it was there, in 1852 or '53, that Ingersoll himself taught a private subscription school.[1] The log house in

[1] Mr. A. M. L. McBane, a well-known citizen of Shawneetown, Ill., kindly informed the author, under date of Nov. 10, 1905, that he was one of Ingersoll's pupils at Metropolis, adding: "* * * my father having obtained for him the first school he ever taught; and I have his letter to my father asking him to procure it for him." Mr. McBane has since written that he is unable to locate this interesting letter.

which he taught is still standing (1910) at Fourth and Ferry Streets, and is regarded with interest and pride. An anecdote related by residents of Metropolis, in connection with his tutorship, indicates that one of the noblest and most prominent traits of his character, benevolence, was, even at the early age implied, already manifest. It is said that, although he found, at the end of the term, about half of his subscribers unable to pay their tuition, he promptly receipted all bills "in full."

But while his benevolence was undoubtedly manifest at this period, another of his characteristics, wit, was equally so. Indeed, on at least one occasion during his career as a schoolmaster, his wit was so prominently to the fore as to preclude the possibility of such an exercise of benevolence as that mentioned in the preceding paragraph.

Engaged to teach in a rural district, Ingersoll was "boarding 'round." Several Baptist ministers and elders who were conducting a revival in the neighborhood were also "boarding 'round." They made a practice of discussing religion at table. The young teacher took little or no part in their discussions until he was one day pointedly asked what he thought about baptism. He hesitated, but they insisted. Thereupon he said:—

"Well, I'll give you my opinion: With soap, baptism is a good thing."

The brethren were shocked—horrified! The witty thrust sped from gossip to gossip, and so intense did the feeling against its author become that he was obliged to abandon his school. It is interesting, if not pleasing, to note, however, that the pious zeal which compelled the latter action does not seem to have been alive to an overkeen sense of justice; for the patrons of the school concerned failed to recognize, certainly in a practical way, that even an "infidel" teacher was entitled, at least, to compensation for services already rendered according to agreement. As a consequence, young Ingersoll, being otherwise unsupplied with funds, had to make his way on foot to his home—a long distance from where he had merely given an honest answer to an impertinent question.

§ 3.

In 1853 he took up his residence at Marion (with his father, his sister Mary Jane, and his brother Ebon Clark) and commenced the study of law with Hon. Willis Allen and his son William Joshua Allen, Esq., who were practising in partnership. Hon. Willis Allen was a member of Congress, having been elected, as a Democrat, in 1851; he was reëlected as such in 1853. William Joshua Allen, Esq., was a member of the Illinois legislature in 1854, subsequently district attorney, judge of a United States circuit court, and a Demo-

cratic member of Congress for two succeeding terms, being originally elected, in 1861, to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of John A. Logan.

Marion, as at present, was the shire-town of Williamson County, as well as the place of session of the circuit court; and Ingersoll, while studying law, earned his livelihood, and contributed to the support of his father and his sister, by rendering assistance on the records (as a clerk, or "deputy,") in the office of the clerk of that court and of the county court. Captain John Marion Cunningham, who subsequently became the father-in-law of John A. Logan, was clerk of both courts.

Such instruction as Ingersoll received from the Allens, in the intricacies of the law, doubtless came chiefly from the senior of the two, an able lawyer of many years' experience. The younger Allen, though able and ambitious, was but five years Ingersoll's senior, had been in practice only the same number of years, and could hardly have been fitted to impart much information to a mind so richly endowed by nature, and so bountifully stored in an endeavor to satiate its thirst for universal knowledge, as was that of Ingersoll. However, the latter,—none the less then than subsequently, to the discomfiture both of jurists and theologians,—was bristling with questions; and as the best lawyers, and even the judges, "rode circuit" on horseback, from county to

county, there is no doubt that nearly every one of them contributed to his fund of legal lore.

But although he was an earnest and unusually retentive student of the law, he possessed, as previously indicated, a strong love for general literature; and knowing the profound impression which Burns and Shakespeare, in particular, had already made upon him, we feel certain that Kent, Blackstone, *et al.* were occasionally obliged to give first place in his affections to *Lear*, *Hamlet*, and the "ploughman poet."

It is said that, while at Marion, Ingersoll did not impress one as being overambitious. Rather did he incline to manifest at least two of the characteristics of his maturity: he was never in a hurry—liked to indulge the spirit of freedom; and he loved to pour for others the sparkling, warming cordial of wit and humor. He could be seen now around the court-house, now in the office of the Allens, but perhaps nearly as often around the hotel, entertaining his fortunate hearers with stories, or by relating the great and wonderful things he had read. He was recognized as the most captivating story-teller in the place. "He seemed to want everybody to be happy." His overflowing good-naturedness, with a tendency to rollicking, though innocent, amusements, made him the central favorite of every party of young people with whom he chanced to find himself. But he did not usually associate with young people: he

habitually went with those older than himself. Individuals of his own years "looked up" to him. A very interesting confirmation of this is the fact that many people who were acquainted with both Ebon and Robert in their youth, now confidently recall (and are ready to argue the point) that Robert was the older, whereas he was two years younger.

The technical requirements for admission to the bar were then incomparably less exacting than at present, a condition which was undoubtedly fortunate, not only for the occasional applicant whose brain was capable of being something more than a well-wound, well-regulated forensic mechanism, but for the world at large. It is questionable whether the gate which has more recently been erected across the path to juristic authority and honors would swing wide enough to clear a Lincoln or an Ingersoll. However this may be, the latter, when he visited Mount Vernon on December 20th of the following year (1854), with the required certificate of moral character not only in his pocket, but in his countenance, evidently carried also the necessary certificate in his brain; for, together with his brother Ebon Clark, he was promptly admitted to the bar.[1]

[1] As nearly as I have been able to ascertain, the requirements that Ingersoll was obliged to fulfil were: (1) Furnishing a certificate "of his good moral character" "from the court of some county" (which certificate he probably procured from the court of Williamson County, at Marion); (2) an examination (more or less perfunctory) in open court; (3) providing liquid refreshments for the officers of the court at Mount Vernon; and (4) taking the oath of office as an attorney.

In 1855 he settled in Shawneetown, the county-seat of Gallatin, being at first engaged in the Federal land-office, of which Captain Cunningham (who also had removed from Marion) was register, and of which Samuel K. Casey, Esq., an able lawyer, was receiver. Soon relinquishing this employment, Ingersoll entered, as deputy, the office of the clerk of the county court and of the circuit court,[1] working for a part of the time on the records, as he had done at Marion, but giving his more serious attention to the law, in the office of Judge William G. Bowman, much after the manner of young attorneys of the present day. Judge Bowman was then an eminent lawyer, and was afterwards a member of the Constitutional Convention of the State of Illinois, a state senator, and surveyor-general of Utah.

In addition to his legal attainments, he was a man of general intellectual taste and culture, and

[1] John E. Hall held both the office of clerk of the county court and clerk of the circuit court, and it was on November 11, 1856, while he was dictating some official paper to Ingersoll, that he was shot by Robert C. Sloo, a young graduate of West Point, and instantly killed, falling into Ingersoll's arms. The shooting was the result of a political feud. Hall and Sloo's father, Colonel James G. Sloo, the local Democratic leader, were bitter enemies. Young Sloo alleged that a certain letter which was published in the *Intelligencer*, of Marion, Ill., on October 10, 1856, under the pseudonym "Vindex," and which seriously reflected upon the character of Colonel Sloo and family, was written by Hall. After an exciting trial, which lasted forty-two days, and in which John A. Logan, Leonard Swett, John W. Crockett, and other noted lawyers took part, the slayer was acquitted on the ground of emotional insanity.

a rationalist in religious matters. The latter fact naturally rendered his office, in the eyes of young Ingersoll, a specially attractive place. Similarly, a mind which not only gave promise of a brilliant legal career, but which was already projecting its luminous rays into the dark corners of politics and theology, rendered Ingersoll, in the eyes of Judge Bowman, a specially attractive young man. He could reason closely, and argue convincingly, on almost any subject. He was taking a hand in local politics. He was so efficient and popular as deputy clerk that he was mentioned as the probable successor to Hall. And it was during this period that he delivered his first public anti-theological discourse.

Judge Bowman possessed not only an excellent legal library, but what was regarded as an unusually large private collection of general and miscellaneous literature. Of this fortunate circumstance, young Ingersoll took eager advantage. He would often read far into the night,—always ready, on the morrow, to discuss, or to repeat in toto, whatever he had read. Nor did he, from all accounts, ever lack an opportunity. His remarkable memory, common sense, and felicity of expression attracted the attention of all. He seemed, even then, to possess the unconscious faculty of making and holding friends—the genius of friendship. In fact, he manifested, in a greater or less degree, all the mental and temperamental attributes which

were destined soon to make his name familiar throughout the Prairie State.

During the first year of his residence in Shawneetown, he commenced the practice of his profession there, in partnership with his brother Ebon Clark, under the firm-name of "E. C. and R. G. Ingersoll." But their stay was not to be a long one. However perfect a sense of contentment may have been felt by the older lawyers of the place, who had to its manner grown, it was impotent to cast its insidious lethargic spell over the kindling brilliancy of Robert G. Ingersoll. Of its probable environmental advantages, we catch a glimpse through the latter himself when he ludicrously describes its court-house, at the time of his practice there, as "a square box with a horse hitched on each side and a pimple on top"! Nevertheless, it was not, be it said in passing, the same quiet town which it later became, and which it now is: rather was it the metropolis of southern Illinois. However, Peoria offered, from every standpoint, a far more promising field. The fact that it was already a railroad-center of some importance, and gave indications of becoming much more prominent in this respect, added very materially to its advantages as a forensic battle-ground. Moreover, the managers of some of its largest industrial concerns had become Ingersoll's clients. They had placed in his hands for adjustment, in Shawneetown and adjoining places, a number of important

claims, and he had shown unusual talent. In fact, such notable legal ability had he displayed, that his clients, in recognition, and in the spirit of helpfulness, had extended to him an urgent invitation to transfer his professional residence to their own city. Accordingly, it was to Peoria, in February, 1857, that he removed, to continue the practice of law with his brother, under the same firm-name, "E. C. and R. G. Ingersoll."

CHAPTER III.

FROM EIGHTEEN FIFTY-EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN SIXTY-SIX

INGERSOLL'S reputation for brilliancy having preceded him, success in Peoria was his from the start. His services were eagerly sought. But he did not on that account neglect the theoretical side of his profession: he continued, as he had done even after entering practice at Shawneetown, the assiduous study of law. He was intensely enthusiastic. He was enthusiastic on other subjects also; but he did not allow them to occupy his attention to the jeopardy of his immediate purpose. He knew that if he was to accomplish what he hoped some time to accomplish in other fields,—the field of rationalism particularly,—he must stand upon a firm and broad economic and intellectual foundation; and he felt that the realization of this prerequisite would be coincident with a thoroughly established legal practice and reputation.

The "bench and bar" of Peoria, during Ingersoll's residence there, included, at various times, many men of national fame or local eminence—

Lincoln, Douglas, Davis, the Puterbaughs, Pinckney, Purple, Breeze, Manning, Merriam, McCune, O'Brien, and others. Ingersoll himself was wont to say, in after-years, that he never knew of another local legal aggregation of such ability.

To shine in so brilliant a galaxy, implied a star of no mean magnitude; and this Ingersoll assuredly did. As partners (beside his brother), he had, at different periods, McCune, George Puterbaugh, and Judge Sabin D. Puterbaugh, the author of *Common Law Pleading and Practice* and *Chancery Pleading and Practice*. He was always associated with the ablest men, and was the central figure in the most noted trials. He was prëeminently successful, seldom losing a case. His practice, being of general character, offered fitting opportunity for the exercise of his wonderful powers and resources; and within a few years from his arrival in Peoria, he was recognized not only as the leader of his profession there, but as the peer in every respect, and the superior in most respects, of any lawyer who ever belonged to the bar of Illinois.

§ 2.

In 1860 Ingersoll was Democratic candidate for representative in Congress from the Fourth Congressional District of Illinois, his opponent being Judge William Kellogg, a Republican. The campaign in which Ingersoll and Kellogg were oppo-

nents is on record as the most exciting, aggressive, and bitterly contested, in the political history of Illinois. "The people of the State," says Hon. Clark E. Carr,[1] a lifelong resident thereof, "seemed to give themselves up entirely to this political campaign. As I look back upon the struggle, I wonder now that lands were cultivated or that anyone found time for any of the ordinary avocations of life." From the standpoint of age and experience, as compared with those of his opponent, Ingersoll was at great disadvantage. He was only twenty-seven years old, and had never been a candidate for an office of any considerable importance, while Judge Kellogg was many years his senior, and an experienced and successful politician, having assisted in organizing the Republican party, and having served two terms in Congress, to which he was seeking reëlection. But, despite his great disadvantages, Ingersoll out-talked, outreasoned, and worsted his antagonist at every turn. However, Lincoln swept the state, to the perfect satisfaction of Ingersoll himself less than a year later, as we shall see; and the young candidate, with many others, was sorely defeated.

But the supreme fact to be noted in connection with this period of Ingersoll's life is, that, notwithstanding the party with which he was then allied, he went much further in the denunciation

[1] *The Illini, A Story of the Prairies*, p. 300.

of slavery than did his very opponent in "the party of Lincoln." While Judge Kellogg admitted that he would enforce the law in favor of slavery, Ingersoll declared that he would break the law, in favor of liberty. While Judge Kellogg admitted, that, as a law-abiding citizen, he would enforce the Fugitive Slave Law, Ingersoll declared:—

"Rather than interfere between any human being and his liberty, I would be condemned to be chained in the lowest depths of hell!"

A graphic account of the Ingersoll-Kellogg contest is given by Colonel Carr, whose *Illini* has already been quoted, and who was an active participant in the campaign in which that contest occurred. After setting forth Judge Kellogg's position on the question of slavery, Colonel Carr states, in another important historical work:[1]—

"We Republicans, therefore, regarded Kellogg as the champion of freedom and supposed that, as a matter of course, his opponent would appear as the champion of slavery. Never was a people more astonished than were we in Galesburg when we then, for the first time, heard Robert G. Ingersoll.

"Immediately upon his nomination Ingersoll challenged Judge Kellogg to joint discussion, face to face, throughout the district. * * *

* * * * * * *

"The first joint debate * * * was held in the old Dunn's Hall at Galesburg. Galesburg was the most enthusiastic Republican town in all that region. Most of the people were really abolitionists. One of the fundamental tenets of the founders of the town was earnest and eternal antagonism to human slavery. The town was known and recognized throughout the West, especially in the adjoining slave

[1] *My Day and Generation*, p. 332.

State of Missouri, as an 'abolition hole.' * * * In the debate in our city, Judge Kellogg had the opening and closing. * * *

* * * * * * *

"After * * * giving the audience to understand that he was not an abolitionist, and that he favored the Fugitive Slave Law, Judge Kellogg went on to show what a sacred compact the Missouri compromise was, * * * and intimated that this young gentleman who was running against him would have difficulty in persuading the people of Galesburg and that Congressional District to vote for him and by so doing favor the extension of slavery into the new Territories.

"I remember with what interest I looked at that young man, whom we had regarded up to that moment as a pro-slavery Douglas Democrat, apparently unconsciously listening to what seemed to all of us to be beyond the power of any one to answer. I shall never forget how he looked as he commenced speaking, and as he warmed into his subject. It seems to me now after the lapse of all these years, that even then he was the most brilliant, the most inspiring, the most majestic, and, withal, the most convincing of orators. As the years went by while he and I were young, and as we advanced to and beyond middle life, it was my fortune to hear him frequently, and from that hour at Galesburg I have always believed that Robert G. Ingersoll was the greatest orator who ever stood before a public audience.

"His first sentence, as he commenced speaking, was 'The Fugitive Slave Law is the most infamous enactment that ever disgraced a statute book;' then he exclaimed—'The man who approves of or apologizes for that infamy is a brute!'

"This [the author continues, later] was only one of the appalling pictures the young orator painted of slavery and the Fugitive Slave Law, after which he exclaimed:

"'Judge Kellogg favors and approves all these horrors, for he distinctly avows himself to be in favor of the Fugitive Slave Law. And yet he is no worse than are all the trusted leaders of your boasted Republican party. Your Abe Lincoln himself, whose name is at the head of your ticket, distinctly declares himself in favor of the enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, as do all the Old Line Whigs who make up the warp and woof of the Republican party.'"

In concluding his account of this the first of

about twenty similar debates, Colonel Carr thus comments upon Ingersoll's effort :—

"It may be doubted whether there was ever pronounced by any human being so terrific a philippic against human slavery and the Fugitive Slave Law. I myself had heard Beecher and Garrison and Wendell Phillips and Lovejoy and Giddings, but I had never heard it equalled."

Even had we only the preceding indications of Ingersoll's political and sociological views at the time, the question of how truly he would have reflected the ideals of his Democratic constituents, had he been elected, might be safely left to the inference of an intelligent public. But no trusting to inference is here required. Indeed, the published record of events just subsequent to the campaign in question,—a record which, moreover, is vividly written in the memories of many surviving participants,—provides us with the strongest evidence that Ingersoll, as a Democratic congressman, would have stood for precisely what he had stood, among other things, as a candidate—human liberty and the sublime integrity of the Great Republic.

In this immediate connection not only, but by way of furnishing an authentic historic version of his change of political affiliations, and, incidentally, further indications of his power and influence as an orator, long before he achieved national renown, I again quote *The Illini*,—page 302 :—

"In that campaign [1860] there first appeared upon the hustings and before public assemblages in Illinois a man who became known as

the greatest of American orators * * * . This wonderful man was none other than Robert G. Ingersoll, then the Democratic candidate for Congress in our District. Douglas man although he was, no one was so eloquent in denunciation of human slavery and of those who were plotting against the Union. To those of us who knew and heard Robert G. Ingersoll at that time, it was not surprising that on the day of the firing upon Fort Sumter he declared himself for his country and against her enemies, and that from that day forward he was a Republican in politics. No man can estimate the power and influence of Ingersoll in arousing the American people to a sense of their solemn responsibilities when the war came upon them, or in awakening them to a sense of justice and a proper appreciation of the rights of men. One must have heard him before a great audience in the open air, as we in Illinois so often did, to appreciate his great power. Every emotion of his soul, every pulsation of his heart, was for his country and for liberty; and no other man has ever been able in so high a degree to inspire others with the sentiments that animated him. No just history of Illinois can be written without placing high upon the scroll of fame the name of Robert G. Ingersoll."

It will accordingly be seen, at least on the face of events, that Ingersoll was a Democrat until the attack upon Fort Sumter, April 12, 1861, and a Republican thence to the day of his death. But to those who have alike the capacity and the candor to see beneath the superficiality of a mere political denomination, it will be convincingly evident, more especially as we proceed, that, as a matter of actuality, he was, from first to last, not primarily either a Democrat or a Republican, but an unfaltering champion of both physical and intellectual liberty, of justice, and of the American Republic, as the best means of achieving and maintaining them.

§ 3.

In the same year (1860), Ingersoll delivered at Pekin, Ill., the first of his anti-theological lectures of which any report has been preserved. It was entitled *Progress*. This lecture, which, naturally with some slight additions, was again delivered at Bloomington, Ill., in 1864, defines the meaning and the goal of progress, discusses the conditions essential to the latter, and presents a masterly arraignment of superstition, and of both physical and mental slavery in all their forms. Those present must have recognized in this peroration,—coming with the grace and ardor of flame from the heart and brain of early manhood,—a harbinger of him who, just twenty years later, was "unflatteringly" pronounced, by another great orator, "the most brilliant speaker of the English tongue of all men on this globe:—[1]

"We are standing on the shore of an infinite ocean whose countless waves, freighted with blessings, are welcoming our adventurous feet. Progress has been written on every soul. The human race is advancing.

"Forward, oh sublime army of progress, forward until law is justice, forward until ignorance is unknown, forward while there is a spiritual or temporal throne, forward until superstition is a forgotten dream, forward until the world is free, forward until human reason, clothed in the purple of authority, is king of kings." (iv 476).

§ 4.

Biography is replete with accounts according to

[1] To be detailed in Chapter V.

which, in the immutable succession of cause and effect, occurrences of great import have followed the most trivial incidents,—according to which the lives of very great individuals have been influenced, for good or for evil, by the acts of very small ones. But of all men of genius, Ingersoll is probably the only one the supreme event of whose life hinged solely on the wanton pranks of perhaps the most despised of the animal kingdom. Nor does the shadow of tragedy that regrettably darkens the brief narrative now to be related detract from its romance.

In the autumn of 1861, in Peoria County, Ill., some pigs belonging to a farmer, got astray and were impounded. Their owner, endeavoring to free them, ripped some boards off the pound, whereupon the poundmaster interfered and was shot. An indictment for murder followed; and Ingersoll was retained as counsel for the defense. There being much public feeling over the case, a change of venue was made in favor of Groveland, in Tazewell County.

Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Weld Parker then resided at Groveland, whence, after their marriage, in 1836, they had removed from Boston.—But before proceeding with our story, it is necessary, in order that the event which it relates may appear in its actual significance, to introduce what might otherwise seem like irrelevant biographical and genealogical facts. Mr. and Mrs. Parker had been

preceded to Groveland by Mr. Parker's brothers and mother. The latter, Mrs. Sarah Buckman Parker, was then the widow of a wealthy shipping merchant—a descendant of Captain John Parker, who opened the Battle of Lexington with the words: "Stand your ground; don't fire unless fired upon; but if they mean to have a war, let it begin here." Another descendant of Captain Parker was Theodore Parker, the Unitarian. The Buckman Tavern at Lexington, where met the minute-men, where the wounded were taken, and where marks of the battle are still visible, was kept by the father of Mrs. Sarah Buckman Parker. The latter was a remarkably intelligent and liberal-minded woman. At least one of her ancestors was unusually liberal for his day. Joseph Weld, of England, was a Protestant when all the rest of his family were Catholics. He came to America with his brother; and when, in 1637, Anne Hutchinson was tried for heresy and sentenced to banishment from the Massachusetts Colony, Joseph Weld gave her refuge for two or three months, or until the wintry elements had abated sufficiently to permit of her departure. Sarah Buckman Parker had made a study of the different religions, including Christianity, with its several creeds, and had rejected all, becoming a disciple of Thomas Paine. Naturally, therefore, at Groveland, in the thirties, she was one of the first "infidels" of the "West"; and among her many direct descendants, there has never been a single

orthodox believer. Even the wife of her son Benjamin Weld Parker, who was Miss Harriette E. Lyon, daughter of a prominent resident and paper manufacturer of Newton Lower Falls, Mass., was not a Christian. In fact, if Huxley had been present to offer it, both Mr. and Mrs. Parker doubtless would readily have accepted, as the best-fitting intellectual garment, his title of "Agnostic." And not only were they intellectual: they were mentally and socially hospitable. The latter seems well evidenced by the fact that one Boston friend came for a visit and remained forty years, another nine years, and still another three years. Many persons came long distances to converse with Mrs. Sarah Buckman Parker, who frequently visited her son. At the Parkers' was such a library as very few possessed in those days; and Plato says that "a house with a library in it has a soul." Certainly there was soul of strongly magnetic quality in this house; for the latter was the center of a very brilliant and influential circle. It stood on the post-road between Springfield and Peoria; and many of the best-known men of the time, such as Leonard Swett, David Davis, and Abraham Lincoln, often partook of the rare social and intellectual delights that were served within its ever-welcoming portals.

Mr. and Mrs. Parker had long been ardent admirers of the young oratorical genius in Peoria. They recognized that he was beginning to utter

thoughts worthy of the men whose works consecrated the frontmost shelves of their library. When, therefore, he visited Groveland on the legal mission already mentioned, it was inevitable (Mr. Parker having been an eager listener to the eloquent defense) that he should receive an invitation to dinner.

At the Parkers' that evening, Robert G. Ingersoll was impressed by two incidents—by one far more deeply than the other: He saw some books on which were the names "Volney," "Voltaire," and "Thomas Paine," and he looked, for the first time, into the eyes of the woman he loved. On the 13th of the following February, in the same house, Eva A. Parker, "a woman without superstition," became his wife.

Referring, in after-years, to the circumstances under which they met,—to the shooting of the poundmaster, and the consequent trial at Groveland,—Ingersoll was wont to say, in characteristic epigram: "In the echo of that shot was the cry of my babes."

§ 5.

Meantime, with all his hatred of slavery, with all his love of liberty—his veins thrilled with the blood that had made the Declaration a reality—it was natural that the young orator should relinquish, for the moment, the golden thread of eloquence, to grasp that which was then far

1861

(Æt. 28)

Colonel, Eleventh Illinois Cavalry Volunteers.
Enlargement from a daguerreotype.

"mightier," for the sacred cause of "Union and Liberty" at least, than either tongue or "pen." Accordingly, he was one of the first to respond to the Nation's call, being instrumental in raising three regiments of volunteers, during the summer and autumn of 1861. But we are concerned chiefly with the last of these organizations.

Having obtained (in conjunction with Mr. Basile D. Meek) permission to form a regiment of cavalry, Ingersoll "joined for service" on September 16th, and began recruiting in October. He was commissioned colonel, to rank from the 22d of the latter month, by Richard Yates, governor of Illinois. Recruits for the regiment began to arrive at Camp Lyon, Peoria, about November 1st; and on December 20th, the Eleventh Illinois Cavalry Volunteers, consisting of twelve full companies, Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll commanding, was mustered into the service of the United States and mounted. It remained at Camp Lyon until February 22, 1862, when it broke camp and marched overland to Benton Barracks, Mo., near St. Louis.—

"We see them all as they march proudly away under the flaunting flags, keeping time to the grand, wild music of war—marching down the streets of the great cities—through the towns and across the prairies—down to the fields of glory, to do and to die for the eternal right."[1]

[1] Extract from *A Vision of War*, in turn extracted from a speech to the veteran soldiers of the Rebellion, at Indianapolis, September 21, 1876. (ix 168)

It may be doubted whether there ever was another aggregation of officers and men more absolutely devoted to their commander.

March 26th must have furnished a "crowded hour" of mingled sadness and patriotic devotion for Colonel Ingersoll; for on that day the last of his regiment departed, by boat, from St. Louis, for Pittsburg Landing, near the seat of war; and only since February 13th had "the one of all the world" been "wooed and won." Mrs. Ingersoll had accompanied her husband to St. Louis,[1] whence she was to return home.—

"And some are talking with wives, and endeavoring with brave words, spoken in the old tones, to drive from their hearts the awful fear."[2]

On April 1st the regiment landed, the first battalion at Crump's Landing, where it joined the forces of General Lew Wallace; the remainder of the regiment, at Pittsburg Landing, about two miles from which it encamped. It was in the heat of the Battle of Shiloh, on the 6th and 7th, meeting with severe losses in both killed and wounded. In that battle, the greatest that had thus far been fought on land, Colonel Ingersoll, although it was his first experience under fire, won great admira-

[1] Referring, thirty-five years later, to this incident, Ingersoll said that, while on their wedding-tour, they visited Shaw's Garden, in St. Louis, and afterwards the Kew Gardens, in London; but their "remembrance of Shaw's left Kew in the shade."

[2] Extract from *A Vision of War.*

tion for his soldierly conduct and courage. His regiment was on duty between Pittsburg Landing and Corinth until the capture of the latter, and participated in the celebrated raid in its rear. It took part in the engagements at Bolivar, Tenn., on August 30th, and at Davis Bridge, on the Hatchie River, Tenn., on September 25th, sustaining severe loss at the latter. In the Battle of Corinth, on October 3d and 4th,[1] Colonel Ingersoll exemplified the same admirable qualities the possession of which he had demonstrated on the field of Shiloh. In addition to his services in these two memorable battles, and in the less memorable engagements indicated, he of course performed his full share of the extremely active and arduous duties of reconnoitring, scouting, and skirmishing that ordinarily devolve upon cavalry in the field.

During the winter of 1862–'63, his regiment was stationed at Jackson, Tenn. Having been advised that Brigadier-General (subsequently Lieutenant-General) Nathan B. Forrest, of the Confederate army, who was on an expedition into West Tennessee, was crossing Tennessee River at Clifton, with a large force, Colonel Ingersoll's immediate superior, Brigadier-General Jeremy C. Sullivan, of the Federal army, commanding the District of Jackson, ordered Colonel Ingersoll to proceed toward that river. Forrest's immediate ob-

[1] These dates are from *The Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia.* Some other works give October 4th and 5th.

jective point, apparently, was Jackson, which is about fifty miles to the northwest of Clifton. Accordingly, Colonel Ingersoll left Jackson on the evening of December 16th, taking with him two hundred of his own regiment and one section (two guns) of the Fourteenth Indiana Battery. On the morning of the 17th, he arrived at Lexington, which is a few miles north of the middle of a direct line between Jackson and Clifton, and where he was joined by two hundred and seventy-two of the Second West Tennessee. Having resumed his march, he halted, soon after noon, about five miles east of Lexington. At nightfall, his cavalry scouts having reported the appearance of the enemy in large force a few miles in front, he fell back to within half a mile of Lexington. Here he was joined by two hundred of the Fifth Ohio, making his total force, including a reconnoitring party which had been sent ahead three days before, about eight hundred officers and men. Of these, about three hundred were poorly equipped, and had never been under fire, while two hundred more were raw recruits, having never been under fire, nor even drilled. Colonel Ingersoll's total effective force was therefore scarcely more than three hundred officers and men, including only two guns.

About daybreak of the 18th, four and one-half miles east of Lexington, the advance pickets of the enemy were sighted; and, after considerable

skirmishing, an engagement ensued. In his first assault, the enemy, who was now seen to be in great numbers, was gallantly repulsed; but Colonel Ingersoll deemed it best for the main part of his force to fall back and concentrate its efforts in another direction, in which the enemy was reported to be approaching in even greater numbers, by means of a bridge,[1] which, contrary to Colonel Ingersoll's orders, one of the officers under his command had failed to destroy during the previous evening. No sooner had Colonel Ingersoll gained his new position than he found that the enemy was pouring in from all directions. It was then that Colonel Ingersoll exhibited, even more admirably than he had done at Shiloh and Corinth, soldierly judgment, remarkable coolness, and bravery. Sending a detachment to hold the bridge, he planted his two guns in the Lexington road, deployed the remainder of his little handful of men in a single line at right angles to the road, on either side, and awaited the assault. Nor did he wait long; for, in a moment, the forces of General Forrest—a column not only longer than his own single file, but five and six ranks deep—bore quickly down upon him, sweeping before them, on the full run, the detachment which Colonel Ingersoll had sent to hold the bridge. The members of this detachment had never before been under fire, nor felt the terrifying potency of the

[1] Over Beech Creek.

"rebel yell"; and it was impossible to stop them. Meanwhile, a part of Colonel Ingersoll's own cavalry, in the rear of the guns, was ordered to advance and, as soon as those on the retreat were out of the way, charge the enemy, which was then and again repulsed. About this time, Colonel Ingersoll dismounted and stood by the guns, encouraging his men, and personally directing their fire, until a desperate cavalry charge was transformed into a hand-to-hand encounter, and until the enemy swept over and around him. But as well might a child have attempted to arrest the progress of an avalanche. For, despite Colonel Ingersoll's personal gallantry, and that of many of his officers and men, particularly those of his own cavalry and of the artillery, many others, when most imperatively needed, could not be successfully rallied; and even had the conduct of the latter been just the opposite, the outcome of the engagement could hardly have been different from what it was. For the enemy was in overpowering numbers—variously estimated, in official Federal reports, at from five thousand to twenty thousand, including eight twelve-pounder guns. Thrice repulsed, his fourth assault (having succeeded, in spite of Colonel Ingersoll's efforts to prevent, in sending a flanking detachment on either side) was a complete victory, twenty-two officers and men being either killed or wounded, and one hundred and forty-eight others, including Colonel Ingersoll, being taken prisoners.

It is significant that General Forrest, reporting to General Bragg, six days later, concerning this and the several other engagements in West Tennessee, commends his officers "for their gallantry in the fight at Lexington," one of them, Captain Frank B. Gurley, of the Fourth Alabama Cavalry, who captured the guns, having lost "his orderly-sergeant by the fire of the gun when within 15 feet of its muzzle." General Forrest mentions, in this connection, only one other fight.[1]

It is thoroughly characteristic of Ingersoll, that, even at the frightful crisis of his capture, his wit was in active evidence. "Stop firing!" he shouted to Major G. V. Rambaut, of General Forrest's command. "I'll acknowledge your d—— old Confederacy." Immediately after this, the General himself rode up, and substantially the following colloquy occurred:—

"Who's in command of those troops?" cried Forrest, pointing toward some of the flying cavalrymen.

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[1] The *Life of General Nathan Bedford Forrest*, by John Allan Wyeth, M.D., gives the former's total force at Lexington as 2,500 and his total effective fighting force as not over 1,500.

At page 111 Captain Gurley, who led the charge on Colonel Ingersoll's battery, is quoted as follows: "The gunners stood by their guns and died like soldiers. The last shot was fired just as we reached the battery, and my first sergeant, J. L. P. Kelly, and his horse were blown to atoms by the explosion."

And the author himself says later: "The Eleventh Illinois, under Colonel Ingersoll and Captain Burbridge, held their ground bravely until carried away by the Tennessee and Ohio cavalry, which fled, and then they were forced to yield."

"I don't know," replied Ingersoll, jocularly.

"Who was in command?" amended the General.

"If you'll keep the secret," said Ingersoll, blandly, "I'll tell you. I was."

At that moment began a warm friendship, which terminated only with the life of General Forrest. He never lost an opportunity to visit the Federal colonel who, "in the great days," unwillingly but wittily became his guest.

Three days after his capture, Colonel Ingersoll was paroled by General Forrest, and sent to St. Louis, to command a camp of other paroled prisoners. There, despairing of exchange and return to active duty, he resigned his commission, and was honorably discharged, on June 30, 1863. But the Republic by no means lost his services; for, returning to civil life in Peoria, he embraced, with ardent and patriotic devotion, every opportunity to further, with his incomparable eloquence and great prestige, the cause of "Union and Liberty."

CHAPTER IV.

FROM EIGHTEEN SIXTY-SEVEN TO EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-SEVEN

ON FEBRUARY 28, 1867, Ingersoll became attorney-general of Illinois, serving as such until January 11, 1869. He was appointed by Governor Richard J. Oglesby, but undoubtedly would have succeeded himself when the office was made elective, had he not renounced the candidacy therefor. The reasons for the renunciation indicated will be noted later. Meantime, we come, in proper narrative sequence, to another act, an act which, for manliness,—for unswerving fidelity to the dictates of conscience,—has never been surpassed in the history of American politics.

On May 6, 1868, the Republican state convention met in Peoria to select a candidate for the governorship of Illinois. Although no special efforts had been made in Ingersoll's behalf, it was found, at once, that he was the first choice of three-fourths of the delegates. But some of the more sagacious questioned the political wisdom of that choice. Ingersoll, even thus early, had become, as far as the preachers were concerned, the best-hated individual in all the state; and the delegates, notwith-

standing their high personal regard for the man, could not afford to launch the bark of their aspirations without some assurance that it would not be dashed against the jagged rock of his heterodoxy. They wanted a pledge from their prospective leader, who, be it marked, had yet to achieve national renown. Accordingly, a committee was appointed to confer with him, the convention adjourning to await the result. It had not long to wait:—

"Gentlemen, I am not asking to be governor of Illinois. * * * I have in my composition that which I have declared to the world as my views upon religion. My position I would not, under any circumstances, not even for my life, seem to renounce. I would rather refuse to be president of the United States than to do so. My religious belief is my own. It belongs to me, not to the State of Illinois. I would not smother one sentiment of my heart to be the emperor of the round globe."

In these days, when the gaze can scarcely be extended without revealing a politician at the feet of a priest, this reply is as strangely refreshing as would be a fountain that should burst from the fevered breast of the desert.

For the sake of narrative completeness and historic justice, I may add that the convention, having declined to nominate Ingersoll because he refused to stultify himself, conferred the honor of nomination upon a man who, by previously declaring that he was not a candidate,[1] induced Ing-

[1] General John M. Palmer, who was afterwards nominated and elected, telegraphed to General Rowett, while the convention was in session: "Do not permit me to be nominated. I cannot accept."

ersoll to become one, and who, to say the least, did not prevent his friends, in that very convention, from making political capital of the fact that Ingersoll was an "infidel."

And this is not the worst: the same individuals who sought to stake the mental manhood of Ingersoll upon a "tower of silence," to be pecked by the unclean vultures of politics, now desired to retain him as "guide, counselor, and friend." His wisdom, his eloquence—his prestige—must not be lost to them. And so, by the strange alchemy of hypocrisy, his disqualifications for the gubernatorial candidacy suddenly became qualifications for that of attorney-general. Accordingly, insult followed injury; and he was asked to accept the nomination for the latter office. But Robert G. Ingersoll still stood sponsor for his manhood; and his reply on this occasion was about as evasive and difficult of comprehension as had been his reply to the committee from the convention, and presumably, for that reason, did not afford as much pleasure to him who became the successful candidate for the governorship:—

"When I say I am a candidate for a particular office, I mean it; and when I say I am not a candidate for a particular office, I mean that too. When I became a candidate for governor, I renounced my candidacy for attorney-general; and other candidates were invited into the field. I would despise myself forever were I now to become a candidate against any of these men whom, by my action, I have invited to become candidates."

This, as far as his own political preferment was

concerned, sealed Ingersoll's doom, not only in Illinois, but throughout the United States.

There occurred, in connection with this campaign, a little incident which, revealing Ingersoll's sense of justice,—his tenderness and compassion,—even more impressively than the two official replies to the politicians revealed his mental manhood, it is here impossible to omit. The treasure-house of English is filled with priceless gems; and long before I heard of this incident, I had decided (for myself alone) as to which was the greatest, which the tenderest, expression in our language; that the *greatest* was Shakespeare's—"There is no darkness but ignorance," and that the *tenderest*, most *compassionate*, was Whitman's—"Not till the sun excludes you, do I exclude you." But the incident of Ingersoll changed my mind. The particulars of that incident are as follows:

Soon after the campaign, Ingersoll and a number of his associates were gathered in his office in Peoria. Some one mentioned the fact that his orthodox political opponents had circulated the charge that he had referred to Christ as "an illegitimate child."

Now, a small man, confronted with this charge, might have replied:—

"Yes: I said it; and according to your Bible, it is true."

A great man might have added to this:—

"But is it any fault of Christ's?"

But Ingersoll replied :—

"Gentlemen, it isn't to have you think that I would call Christ 'an illegitimate child' which hurts me: it is to think that you should think that I would think any the less of Christ if I knew it was so."

It has been stated by many whose judgment is entitled to great weight, that, had Ingersoll kept silent on religious questions, any place within the gift of the people might have been his. For example, the resolutions of the memorial meeting which was held in Peoria on July 23, 1899, and which was participated in by the most prominent residents of that place,—his lifelong acquaintances and former fellow-citizens and neighbors,—contain the following :—

"* * * At a time when everything impelled him to conceal his opinions, or to withhold their expression, *when the highest honors of the state were his if he would but avoid the discussion of the questions that relate to futurity*, he avowed his belief; he did not bow his knee to superstition, nor countenance a creed from which his intellect dissented.

"Casting aside all the things for which men most sigh—political honor, the power to direct the fortunes of the state, riches and emoluments, the association of the worldly and the well-to-do—he stood forth and expressed his honest doubts, and he welcomed the ostracism that came with it, as a crown of glory, no less than did the martyrs of old.

"* * * *at the time that he made his stand, there was before him only the prospect of loss and of the scorn of the public.*

"We, therefore, who know what a struggle it was to cut loose from his old associations, and what it meant to him at that time, rejoice in his triumph and in the plaudits that came to him for thus boldly avowing his opinions, *and we desire to record the fact that we*

*feel that he was greater than a martyr, greater than a saint, greater than a mere hero—he was a thoroughly honest man.' * * * "*[1]

Hon. Clark E. Carr (ex-minister to Denmark), who is intimately and personally acquainted with the last fifty years of the political history of Illinois, said, in an eloquent address at the Ingersoll memorial meeting in Chicago, on August 6, 1899:—

"We remember how, on account of his splendid services, and his sublime patriotism, we in Knox county and in our part of the state, united in seeking to place him in the chief executive office, *and we remember that by modifying certain views he held, he could have been nominated by acclamation and elected to the high office of Governor of Illinois, which would have opened the way to even higher emoluments and positions;* and we remember with what tenacity and firmness he held to his convictions, and that neither public sentiment, the appeal of friends, nor the allurements of position, could move him to accept as true what he could not believe."[2]

"It is my strong conviction," wrote Dr. Moncure D. Conway, in the *South Place Magazine*, London, "that but for orthodox animosity, Colonel Ingersoll would have been President of the United States. Certainly no man of his ability ever occupied that office."

Many similar remarks might be quoted from like sources. They were often made to Ingersoll himself, by publicists and political leaders. Exact language cannot here be essayed; but the opinion expressed was usually couched in substantially

[1] The italics are mine.

[2] The italics are mine.

the following, if, indeed, in much more intimate terms: 'Were it not for your attitude on religion, you could, with your ability and personality, have any honor that it is possible for the American people to bestow.'

Strange as it may seem to some, the recipient of these intended compliments never appreciated them. And what an alternative mediocrity did put at his feet! As a matter of fact, there was no place in this Republic that could have honored Robert G. Ingersoll. And he could no more have preserved silence on religion, than Shelley could have refrained from pouring forth the marvelous poetry that now glorifies the realm of fancy. Where is the man with imagination enough to picture that iron frame of ample proportions, that classic head and fine, frank face—that embodiment of all the gradations of temperament, from clown to king—sitting acquiescent at the feet of a Talmage!

And suppose that Ingersoll had become president of the United States. Suppose that, unheeding the silent voice within, he had agreed to accept the nomination for the governorship of Illinois,—that is to say, the governorship,—and that, subsequently, with calloused conscience, using his irresistible eloquence to smoothe the way, he had marched to the executive seat of the nation. Would it have been better—better for him and for the world?

Who remembers the governors of states?

How many can recall the names of all the presidents? We remember Washington:—he was the first. We remember Jefferson, who at least penned the sublimest of human documents;—Jefferson! the noble sage, whose lamp of wisdom shineth still. And we remember Lincoln, in whose soul were the sadness and sorrow, the anguish, the despair, and the consolation, of a people;—Lincoln! who kept unscattered in the skies the constellation of the Republic; who caused the bow of equal rights to arch alike the white and the black; whose wit, like lightning, always taking the shortest course, often struck in the highest places; and whose humor, like sunshine, silvered and gilded "the clouds of war";—Lincoln! in his hand the broken fetters, at his feet the bowed slave;—Lincoln! in the ruthless fields, his hand the last laurel on the dying soldier's brow.

The truth is, that, in levying on posterity, there is no extrinsic substitute for intrinsic worth. In the inexorable necessity of things, not an atom can ultimately be otherwise than as it really is. No office *per se* can be great enough to honor an incumbent. Of course, a mediocrity may be masked for a while by the garment of greatness; but to himself all the time, and to the world in due time, he is as inevitable as the atom to the chemist.

Those who regret Ingersoll's failure to reach official supremacy should ponder well this fact.

They should also consider, that rarely, with peoples, has the greatest been chosen to lead or to rule. Nor should this excite surprise; for the individual who bears the unmistakable stamp of moral and intellectual grandeur almost invariably differs sufficiently from his fellows to incur their disapproval, if not their contempt. Nature does not make and break a special die to please the multitude.

Far from regrettable, Ingersoll's declination of the nomination for the governorship of Illinois was one of the richest blessings that ever befell the cause of intellectual freedom. It was an incident which, to the real friend of progress, must ever recall the spirit of the Declaration and of the Emancipation.

In the first place, Ingersoll yearned for inestimably higher things than the governorship of any state, or the presidency of any country, whatever. He could not have been satisfied with being the mere servant of a people. He himself possessed not only ears, but a voice. He had a message for mankind, and he would deliver that message, though it be from a platform denied to him by intolerance, showered with the brickbats of bigotry, stormed by the infantry of ignorance, and raked by the cross-fire of fanaticism.

Had he agreed to accept the nomination previously mentioned, all this yearning for intellectual liberty,—this divine fire of enthusiasm,—

would have been extinguished—like sudden night upon a flame of morning-glories! He would have drunk a subtle poison which, unlike that of Socrates, would have sought out and destroyed every fiber of his moral being. He would have stultified himself,—would have thrust an ignominious orthodox gag into his own mouth; and ever after, in the glass of conscience,—the mirror of memory,—he would have seen that gag projecting on either side.

And suppose, again, that he had become president of the United States, as he almost certainly would have done had he listened to the political sirens of Illinois. What, in general, would have been the result? A splendid hypocrite in The White House; a vast number of pardons; the Federal troops in attendance at prospective "lynching-bees"—that is, the protection of American citizens at home; some allegations that American citizens in China and Turkey had not been protected in their "rights"; a few half-hearted snubs for the royal tyrants and puppets of Europe; a volume or so of really brilliant "state papers" (not to mention the four Thanksgiving proclamations!); a lot of half-great orations, delivered on popular and state occasions; and a book entitled, *Robert G. Ingersoll: Was He an Infidel?*

What have we now? The record of a life that was absolutely true to itself; a record that "runs like a vine around the memory of our

dead"; the record of one who did more for the emancipation of the human mind than all the governors and presidents of history; the record of a man who pursued the straight, unswerving course that wins the hatred of the many and the love of the few,—the execration of the present, and the oak and laurel of the future.

§ 2.

On September 14, 1869, at Peoria, on the occasion of the unveiling of a statue to that deathless savant, Ingersoll first delivered his lecture on *Humboldt*—a life dedicated to the demonstration of "the sublimest of truths," that "the universe is governed by law."

And in the following year came the lecture on *Thomas Paine*; for "with his name left out, the history of liberty cannot be written."

In 1872 was published *The Gods*, a lecture, which, demonstrating that "each nation has created a god" who "has always resembled his creators," naturally lays down, as an initial proposition, this striking paraphrase of Pope: "An honest God is the noblest work of man."

Next following this, in 1873, was delivered the lecture *Individuality*, a noble and earnest plea that all men become worthy of Wordsworth's simile on Milton: "His soul was as a star and dwelt apart."

In 1874 came *Heretics and Heresies*, a brave and splendid plea for intellectual liberty—"Lib-

erty, a word without which all other words are vain."

§ 3.

In the autumn of 1875, accompanied by his wife and children (Eva and Maud), Ingersoll made a brief tour abroad, visiting England, Ireland, and France. Upon his return, he gave at Peoria, on November 16th, for the benefit of "The National Blues," a local military organization, one of the most characteristic lectures of his lifetime. It was entitled: *What I Saw, and What I Did Not See, in England, Ireland, and France.* In it, we have many an inspiring view of his attitude at the shrine of departed genius. Of his visit to Westminster Abbey, for example, he says:—

"Here I came upon a statue of Shakespeare, leaning upon a column, and in his hand a scroll, on which was a quotation from *The Tempest:*

"'And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind: We are such stuff
As dreams are made of, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.'"

And he adds:—

"The last two lines were omitted. But I thought, while standing there, how much greater were those few lines than the cathedral itself."

While in Paris, Ingersoll asked the superintendent of Père Lachaise if he could direct him to the tomb of Auguste Comte; but the superintendent had never even heard of the author of the "Positive Philosophy." Ingersoll then asked the superintendent if he had ever heard of Napoleon Bonaparte.

"Of course I have," he answered, in a half-insulted tone. "Why do you ask me such a question?"

"Simply that I might have the opportunity of saying," replied Ingersoll, "that when everything connected with Napoleon, except his crimes, shall have been forgotten, Auguste Comte will be lovingly remembered as a benefactor of the human race."

Whether or not Ingersoll then found the object of his inquiry, he found the tomb of Napoleon; and his now world-famous "Soliloquy" there, first given in the lecture above mentioned, was the result.

§ 4.

The year 1876 was one of the most varied and eventful, if not the most memorable, in the life of Ingersoll. May 22d found him in the heat and ardor of forensic argument, delivering, at Chicago, his celebrated *Address to the Jury in the Munn Trial*,[1] in which his client, the defendant, proved to

[1] Upon popular remembrance, this address has a claim chiefly because of its containing a passage ardently and poetically descriptive of the demoralizing effects of alcohol. This passage, with the title

be innocent; while only two days later, at Peoria, "to fulfill a promise made many years ago," he pronounced at the grave of his father-in-law, Mr. Benjamin Weld Parker, the first of those tributes which, for purity, simplicity, and charm of diction, and for pathos and truly poetic recognition of the nothingness of all animate nature in the presence of the inevitable tragedy of death, will go down to posterity unequaled in our tongue.

§ 5.

But Ingersoll's chief accomplishment, his most dramatic act, his most consummate achievement, as a whole, during this year, and, in its far-reaching influence for his personal preferment, the greatest oratorical triumph of his life, was the nomination of Blaine for the presidency, at the Republican national convention, in Cincinnati, on June 15th. From a reputation that was hardly more than local, he sprang to a reputation that was general. The oratorical wonder of his state, he became, in a brief half-hour, the Cicero of his country and his age. As *The Elegy*, in a moment, made Gray immortal; as *The Cotter's Saturday Night* instantly rendered deathless the name of Burns; so Ingersoll received

"Alcohol," has been published in Ingersoll's *Prose Poems and Selections*. About a year after the delivery of the address, some temperance lecturer appropriated from it the passage in question, added to the latter another passage (which he also appropriated) from an unknown third person, and published the whole as his (the lecturer's) own.

upon his brow the fadeless laurel of Polymnia, as he tossed from his fervent lips the "shining lance" and argent "plume" of James G. Blaine.

That Ingersoll's triumph was inevitable is as certain now, when we consider the man and the time, as it was surprising then. The year,—it was historic—a year of patriotic memories; the issues,—they were fraught with as much gravity as any that could concern the citizens of the Republic; the party,—although in power, it was beginning to show symptoms of internal discontent, of dissension, of weakness, and, for the first time in twelve years, its most hopeful wisdom beheld what it feared were the shadowy portents of defeat; the convention,—it was, both because of those present, and of those whose interests were there at stake, one of almost unexampled dignity, but withal a convention in which the tides and currents of ambition and intrigue surged fierce and wild; the prospective nominee,—he was the most audacious, the most impetuous, and the most inspiring of leaders—the idol of the hour. Such a year, such issues, such an outlook, such an assemblage, such a leader—these, each and all, were calculated to stir the utmost depths of the orator—his patriotism, his love of liberty and justice, his pride and prejudice, his emotions, his electrifying enthusiasm:—

"Ingersoll moved out from the obscure corner and advanced to the central stage. As he walked forward, the thundering cheers, sustained and swelling, never ceased. As he reached the platform, they

took on an increased volume of sound ; and for ten minutes the surging fury of acclamation, the wild waving of fans, hats, and handkerchiefs, transformed the scene from one of deliberation to that of a bedlam of rapturous delirium. Ingersoll waited with unimpaired serenity until he should get a chance to be heard. * * * And then began an appeal, impassioned, artful, brilliant, and persuasive. * * *

"Possessed of a fine figure, a face of winning, cordial frankness, Ingersoll had half won his audience before he spoke a word. It is the attestation of every man that heard him, that so brilliant a master stroke was never uttered before a political convention. Its effect was indescribable. The coolest-headed in the hall were stirred to the wildest expression. The adversaries of Blaine, as well as his friends, listened with unswerving, absorbed attention. Curtis sat spellbound, his eyes and mouth wide open, his figure moving in unison with the tremendous periods that fell in a measured, exquisitely graduated flow from the Illinoisan's smiling lips. The matchless method and manner of the man can never be imagined from the report in type. To realize the prodigious force, the inexpressible power, the irrestrainable fervor of the audience, requires actual sight.

"Words can do but meager justice to the wizard power of this extraordinary man. He swayed and moved and impelled and restrained and worked, in all ways, with the mass before him, as if he possessed some key to the innermost mechanism that moves the human heart, and when he finished, his fine, frank face as calm as when he began, the overwrought thousands sank back in an exhaustion of unspeakable wonder and delight."[1]

The speech :—

"Massachusetts may be satisfied with the loyalty of Benjamin H. Bristow ; so am I ; but if any man nominated by this convention can not carry the State of Massachusetts, I am not satisfied with the loyalty of that State. If the nominee of this convention cannot carry the grand old Commonwealth of Massachusetts by seventy-five thousand majority, I would advise them to sell out Faneuil Hall as a Democratic headquarters. I would advise them to take from Bunker Hill that old monument of glory.

[1] Chicago *Times*, June 16, 1876.

"The Republicans of the United States demand as their leader in the great contest of 1876 a man of intelligence, a man of integrity, a man of well-known and approved political opinions. They demand a statesman; they demand a reformer after as well as before the election. They demand a politician in the highest, broadest and best sense—a man of superb moral courage. They demand a man acquainted with public affairs—with the wants of the people; with not only the requirements of the hour, but with the demands of the future. They demand a man broad enough to comprehend the relations of this Government to the other nations of the earth. They demand a man well versed in the powers, duties and prerogatives of each and every department of this Government. They demand a man who will sacredly preserve the financial honor of the United States; one who knows enough to know that the national debt must be paid through the prosperity of this people; one who knows enough to know that all the financial theories in the world cannot redeem a single dollar; one who knows enough to know that all the money must be made, not by law, but by labor; one who knows enough to know that the people of the United States have the industry to make the money, and the honor to pay it over just as fast as they make it.

"The Republicans of the United States demand a man who knows that prosperity and resumption, when they come, must come together; that when they come, they will come hand in hand through the golden harvest fields; hand in hand by the whirling spindles and the turning wheels; hand in hand past the open furnace doors; hand in hand by the flaming forges; hand in hand by the chimneys filled with eager fire, greeted and grasped by the countless sons of toil.

"This money has to be dug out of the earth. You cannot make it by passing resolutions in a political convention.

"The Republicans of the United States want a man who knows that this Government should protect every citizen, at home and abroad; who knows that any government that will not defend its defenders, and protect its protectors, is a disgrace to the map of the world. They demand a man who believes in the eternal separation and divorcement of church and school. They demand a man whose political reputation is spotless as a star; but they do not demand that their candidate shall have a certificate of moral character signed by a Confederate congress. The man who has, in full, heaped and rounded measure, all these splendid qualifications, is the present grand and gallant leader of the Republican party—James G. Blaine.

"Our country, crowned with the vast and marvelous achievements of its first century, asks for a man worthy of the past, and prophetic of her future; asks for a man who has the audacity of genius; asks for a man who is the grandest combination of heart, conscience and brain beneath her flag—such a man is James G. Blaine.

"For the Republican host, led by this intrepid man, there can be no defeat.

"This is a grand year—a year filled with recollections of the Revolution; filled with proud and tender memories of the past; with the sacred legends of liberty—a year in which the sons of freedom will drink from the fountains of enthusiasm; a year in which the people call for the man who has preserved in Congress what our soldiers won upon the field; a year in which they call for the man who has torn from the throat of treason the tongue of slander—for the man who has snatched the mask of Democracy from the hideous face of rebellion; for the man who, like an intellectual athlete, has stood in the arena of debate and challenged all comers, and who is still a total stranger to defeat.

"Like an armed warrior, like a plumed knight, James G. Blaine marched down the halls of the American Congress and threw his shining lance full and fair against the brazen foreheads of the defamers of his country and the maligners of his honor. For the Republican party to desert this gallant leader now, is as though an army should desert their general upon the field of battle.

"James G. Blaine is now and has been for years the bearer of the sacred standard of the Republican party. I call it sacred, because no human being can stand beneath its folds without becoming and without remaining free.

"Gentlemen of the convention, in the name of the great Republic, the only republic that ever existed upon this earth; in the name of all her defenders and of all her supporters; in the name of all her soldiers living; in the name of all her soldiers dead upon the field of battle, and in the name of those who perished in the skeleton clutch of famine at Andersonville and Libby, whose sufferings he so vividly remembers, Illinois—Illinois nominates for the next President of this country, that prince of parliamentarians—that leader of leaders—James G. Blaine."(ix 55)

The circumstances of the origin and preparation

of this speech, which, as is so well known, awakened unprecedented enthusiasm, not only in the United States and other English-speaking countries, but in France, where it was translated into the native tongue, are of the deepest interest.

Not only Blaine, but Morton also (who was a warm friend of the orator, and whom the latter greatly admired), had requested Ingersoll to place his name before the convention. Being favorable to both, and the matter not being subject to his personal preference, he informed them that, as a member of the Illinois delegation, he would present the name of that delegation's choice.[1]

It was nearing the midnight preceding the nomination when Ingersoll and his brother "Clark" reached their apartment at the hotel in Cincinnati. Not a sentence of the speech that Robert must be ready within twelve hours to deliver had been cast in final form, nor even roughly sketched on paper. His brother, aware of this, was filled with affectionate anxiety. He feared that Robert, through mere negligence, might not rise as gloriously as he knew him to be capable of doing to the golden heights of the coming occasion. He therefore urged the orator to make immediate preparation. But Robert G. Ingersoll would have belied one of his most distinguishing characteristics if, especially when feeling the need of rest, he had

[1] It is said that Ingersoll afterwards remarked to Morton: "I could have made a better speech for you than I made for Blaine."

permitted himself to worry about the exact wording of a speech. So the two brothers retired, and were soon asleep.

Suddenly Robert awoke. It was still dark; but he felt refreshed,—alert. Quietly dressing, he stepped into the adjoining room, closed the door behind him, lit the gas. It was three o'clock. He sat down, and the subject-matter and environment of the prospective speech passed before his mind like a panorama—the year, the issues, the party, the candidate, the vast assemblage in Exposition Hall. The picture was complete. He saw it, felt it; now he must *hear* it—it must satisfy the ear of the poet-orator. He picked up a pen. A little attention, here and there, to rhythm, alliteration, tone-coloring, cadence, and—genius had done its work! Then Robert Ingersoll, with a twinkle that "Clark" didn't even dream of, put out the light and returned to bed as noiselessly as he had risen.

Suddenly he woke again, or rather, was awakened —"Clark" was tugging at his arm in almost importunate anxiety. 'It was nine o'clock—the convention would be in session in two hours—that speech must be written at once!'

"Let's have some breakfast first," said Robert, calmly, as he rose and began to dress.

"No, 'Robin,'" replied "Clark," "you shan't leave this room until you prepare your speech."

"All right, then; how will this do?" he smiling-

ly rejoined, as he drew a manuscript from his pocket and began to read.

"When did you write it?" asked his amazed and delighted brother, at the close.

"Oh, last night, while you were asleep," answered Robert.

Thus was written in solitude, and delivered first to an audience of one, the "Plumed Knight Speech." Thus was kindled, in the pale glimmer of the "midnight oil," the most brilliant flash of eloquence that ever electrified a political convention.

§ 6.

On July 4th, "one hundred years" after "our fathers retired the gods from politics," Ingersoll delivered at Peoria the *Centennial Oration*. While the latter, from opening to close, breathes the most lofty, inspiring, and worshipful patriotism, it contains one passage in particular which, because of sheer simplicity of diction, and tenderness of pathos, it is here impossible to omit. This of the men who bore the Stars and Stripes from the little village green, through the midnight gloom of Valley Forge, to "Yorktown's cloudless day":—

"What did the soldier leave when he went?

"He left his wife and children.

"Did he leave them in a beautiful home, surrounded by civilization, in the repose of law, in the security of a great and powerful republic?

"No. He left his wife and children on the edge, on the fringe of the boundless forest, in which crouched and crept the red savage, who was at that time the ally of the still more savage Briton. He left his

wife to defend herself, and he left the prattling babes to be defended by their mother and by nature. The mother made the living; she planted the corn and the potatoes, and hoed them in the sun, raised the children, and, in the darkness of night, told them about their brave father and the 'sacred cause.' She told them that in a little while the war would be over and father would come back covered with honor and glory.

"Think of the women, of the sweet children who listened for the footsteps of the dead—who waited through the sad and desolate years for the dear ones who never came." (ix 78)

If the time ever comes when the majority of Americans can read without emotion the last two paragraphs, then will the Declaration of Independence have been in vain.

§ 7.

The campaign following the speech at Cincinnati was, for Ingersoll, as far as purely political oratory was concerned, a period of unparalleled activity and influence. Of his reasons for this activity, he has told us very plainly. He entered the Hayes campaign, he says, not as a politician, but as an advocate and defender of certain principles upon which he believed rested the welfare of the nation. He entered the Hayes campaign because he believed, that it "was the turning-point, the midnight, in the history of the American Republic"; because he firmly believed, that, if the Democratic party should sweep into power, it would be "the end of progress," and the end of what he considered "human liberty, beneath our flag." "I went into

the campaign," he says, "simply because the rights of American citizens in at least sixteen states of the Union were trampled under foot. * * * I felt that it was necessary to arouse the North. I felt that it was necessary to tell again the story of the Rebellion, from Bull Run to Appomattox. I felt that it was necessary to describe what the Southern people were doing with Union men, and with colored men; and I felt it necessary so to describe it that the people of the North could hear the whips, and could hear the drops of blood as they fell upon the withered leaves." (ix 228) That he did all this, and much more, the written and traditional accounts of the most remarkable political campaign in our history are ample proof. The number of speeches that he made in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and especially in Maine, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin, is simply enormous; and, what is far more significant, the size, character, and enthusiasm of the assemblages that he addressed are alike unprecedented in American oratory. Every speech, no matter how many had preceded it on the same subject, had a peculiar newness,—a freshness and vigor all its own. As stated by the Chicago *Tribune*, "His voice was the trumpet-call from Maine to California."

Of his address at Bangor, on August 24th, which, by the way, was never revised for publication, *The Whig and Courier* of that city said, among other things:—

"* * * no report could do justice to such a masterly effort as that of the great western orator, and we have not attempted to convey any adequate impression of an address which is conceded on all hands to be the most remarkable for originality, power and eloquence ever heard in this section.

"Such a speech by such a man—if there is another—must be heard; the magnetism of the speaker must be felt; the indescribable influence must be experienced, in order to appreciate his wonderful power. * * * During portions of his address there was moisture in the eyes of every person in the audience, and from opening to close he held the assemblage by a spell more potent than that of any man we have ever heard speak. It was one of the grandest, most cogent and thrilling appeals in behalf of the great principles of liberty, loyalty, and justice to all men, ever delivered, and we wish it might have been heard by every citizen of our beloved Republic." (ix 97)

It is stated, that, after one of Ingersoll's speeches in Maine, the professor of Greek in a college there said:—

"If Demosthenes was ever as eloquent as Ingersoll, he was never properly reported."

The speech at Cooper Union, New York, on September 10th, was, according to *The Cincinnati Daily Times*:

"* * * irresistible—magnificent. It swept along with it an assemblage of greater numbers and finer character than has gathered in our national metropolis to hear any political speaker since the early days of the war. It is pleasant to remember that we shall have an opportunity of listening to a like effort on Monday night the 18th; but it is unfortunate that we have no hall large enough to accommodate the crowd that will gather."

The New York *Tribune* more than justified the first of this quotation, and added, among other things:—

"* * * the presiding officer wisely decided to submit no other speaker to the too severe test of speaking on the same occasion with Mr. Ingersoll."

The *New York Speech*, like the *Bangor Speech*, was published without revision by the orator.

Eleven days later, at Indianapolis, in the course of an address "to the veteran soldiers of the Rebellion,"—almost before the enthusiastic echoes of the "Plumed Knight Speech" had died away,—he gave voice to that imaginative flight which has since become universally known as *A Vision of War*, and which, beyond the uttermost reach of dispute, is the most inspiring, the sublimest, the most truly pathetic, the most perfect, of war-paintings. The reader who does not fully realize the latter would do well to turn from Hugo on Waterloo, or from Lincoln at Gettysburg, to Ingersoll at Indianapolis.

It is not uninteresting, as a test of eloquence, that, during the address last indicated, (the audience being in the open air) two heavy showers occurred without causing any one to seek shelter, many indeed remaining rapt and motionless while the water actually "trickled down their backs" from neighboring umbrellas. Women were hysterical; men were weeping; among the latter being Garfield, who, seated on the platform, rose, at the conclusion of the address, and greeted the speaker with a tearful embrace. If Robert G. Ingersoll had spoken no word before nor since, it would still be the verdict that he was, with con-

summate ease, the most eloquent orator of the English tongue.

On October 5th, twenty thousand people,—said to be the largest political audience that had ever gathered in northern Indiana,—greeted him at Elkhart, special trains being run on all railway branches centering there. He was welcomed with the most eager enthusiasm; for the occasion, far from an ordinary incident of the campaign, was rather an ovation to Ingersoll individually, after his triumphant tour of the eastern states.

Passing over the details of the day, it is no less "curious" now than then "to watch the immense crowd, moved with the thought of the orator"; to witness its "tremendous outbursts" and, anon, its breathless suspense, 'as eye seeks eye in silent wonder.' Even more absorbing is the view afforded by the account of a member of the party that journeyed from Chicago to participate in the welcome:—

"Ingersoll began in his characteristic way, lifting his audience to climax after climax, until men and women who had been seated stood on their feet * * * . Looking down on this great crowd, throbbing to his every utterance, Ingersoll's eyes fell on a group of twenty or thirty women in Quaker garb. There was on every one of those sweet young or old faces a look of absolute wonder. They followed Ingersoll in his soaring eloquence, unbelieving as to his power to release them from the whirlwind-sweep upward and let them safely down. He seemed to catch the meaning of their faces, and, with a manner as caressing and gentle as that of a mother with a babe, he spoke, as if to them, of the glorious traditions of freedom, of the preciousness of the privilege every one enjoyed; and he came

down from his lofty flight with an easy grace, and seemed to settle like a bird on wing over the group of women in drab."

His final political speech of this year was delivered in Chicago, on October 20th. No full stenographic report was made. Extracts, however, were authoritatively preserved and published.

Intent on choosing the most trustworthy medium for conveying, at this late date, something akin to an adequate impression of the appreciation of the orator on the occasion indicated, the temptation to quote from the Chicago *Tribune* of October 21, 1876, the words of one who was present, is too strong to resist :—

"Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll spoke last night at the Exposition Building to the largest audience ever drawn by one man in Chicago. From 6 : 30 o'clock the sidewalks fronting along the building were jammed. At every entrance there were hundreds, and half-an-hour later thousands were clamoring for admittance. So great was the pressure the doors were finally closed, and the entrances at either end cautiously opened to admit the select who knew enough to apply in those directions. Occasionally a rush was made for the main door, and as the crowd came up against the huge barricade they were swept back only for another effort. Wabash Avenue, Monroe, Adams, Jackson, and Van Buren Streets were jammed with ladies and gentlemen, who swept into Michigan Avenue and swelled the sea that surged around the building.

"At 7 : 30 the doors were flung open and the people rushed in. Seating accommodations supposed to be adequate to all demands, had been provided, but in an instant they were filled, the aisles were jammed and around the sides of the building poured a steady stream of humanity, intent only on some coign of vantage, some place, where they could see and where they could hear. From the fountain, beyond which the building lay in shadow to the northern end, was a swaying, surging mass of people.

"Such another attendance of ladies has never been known at a

political meeting in Chicago. They came by the hundreds, and the speaker looked down from his perch upon thousands of fair upturned faces, stamped with the most intense interest in his remarks.

"The galleries were packed. The frame of the huge elevator creaked, groaned, and swayed with the crowd roosting upon it. The trusses bore their living weight. The gallery railings bent and cracked. The roof was crowded, and the sky-lights teemed with heads. Here and there an adventurous youth crept out on the girders and braces. Towards the northern end of the building, on the west side, is a smaller gallery, dark, and not particularly strong-looking. It was fairly packed—packed like a sardine-box—with men and boys. Up in the organ-loft around the sides of the organ, everywhere that a human being could sit, stand, or hang, was pre-empted and filled.

"It was a magnificent outpouring, at least 50,000 in number, a compliment alike to the principle it represented, and the orator."

Another writer[1] who was present (not as a reporter) stated, in a subsequent description of the meeting, that he "never saw anything that began with the wild excitement and enthusiasm manifested by the people" when it was announced that Ingersoll was approaching. 'If,' continues the description, 'the queen of England or the czar of Russia had been coming into the building at one end, and Ingersoll at the other, every face, I believe, would have been turned toward Ingersoll's door of entrance. The royal dignitaries from abroad would have been treated as but common spectators.' This, in conjunction with all that precedes it, renders quite conservative the Chicago *Journal's* tribute: "Ingersoll was the supreme hero in the Hayes campaign."

[1] Prof. John Syphers.

§ 8.

In the following year (1877), national questions not distracting his attention, Ingersoll continued, with renewed vigor, his anti-theological crusade. In his first lecture, *The Liberty of Man, Woman, and Child*, he made, not for himself alone, but in behalf of his fellows, clerical and lay, what he afterwards advised every other man and every woman to make,—"an individual declaration of independence." He said:—

"I have made up my mind to say my say. I shall do it kindly, distinctly; but I am going to do it. I know there are thousands of men who substantially agree with me, but who are not in a condition to express their thoughts. They are poor; they are in business; and they know that should they tell their honest thought, persons will refuse to patronize them—to trade with them; they wish to get bread for their little children; they wish to take care of their wives; they wish to have homes and the comforts of life. Every such person is a certificate of the meanness of the community in which he resides. And yet I do not blame these people for not expressing their thought. I say to them: 'Keep your ideas to yourselves; feed and clothe the ones you love; I will do your talking for you. The church cannot touch, cannot crush, cannot starve, cannot stop or stay me; I will express your thoughts.'" (i 354)

This lecture was repeated at the Grand Opera House, San Francisco, Monday evening July 9th, the proceeds, a large sum, being equally divided among the Ladies' Protection and Relief Society, the Pacific Hebrew Orphan Asylum and Home Society, and the Orphan Asylum Society.

Then came *The Ghosts*. "Let them cover their

eyeless sockets with their fleshless hands and fade forever from the imagination of men," he declared.

Ingersoll having delivered this (as well as the preceding) lecture in San Francisco, the clergy of that city, eager to discover a vulnerable point at which to attack him from the pulpit, telegraphed forthwith to the late Mr. William Reynolds, a very prominent religious worker,[1] at the lecturer's home (Peoria), asking to be furnished with any available information reflecting upon the latter's personal character. Mr. Reynolds replied that, aside from Ingersoll's anti-theological views, there was no such information. But the clergy made their attack just the same! Ingersoll retorted, on June 27th, with *My Reviewers Reviewed*, one of his ablest and lengthiest lectures.

His address *About Farming in Illinois*, made during this season, contains the following striking epigram: "To plow is to pray, to plant is to prophesy, and the harvest answers and fulfills."

The Eight to Seven Address, so called because eight of the congressional electoral commission of fifteen declared for the election of Hayes, and seven thereof for that of Tilden, was delivered in Tremont Temple, Boston, in October, before one of the largest, most enthusiastic, and yet most select and critical audiences, even for that lecture-

[1] Organizer of Calvary Mission Sunday School, 1861; founder of Calvary Presbyterian Church, 1867; field superintendent of International Sunday School Organization, 1887–'97.

loving city; William Lloyd Garrison, James T. Fields, and the governor of Massachusetts being among those present. "The lecture," as Bostonians insisted upon calling it, opened with a concise statement of Ingersoll's reasons for participating in the campaign of Hayes, and "contained a witty, philosophical, and intensely patriotic view of the political contest preceding and following the recent election, with wise and timely suggestions for preventing similar perils in the future." A Boston paper stated that Ingersoll's reputation as the greatest living orator was conceded to be firmly and justly established.

Ingersoll also published during this year a *Vindication of Thomas Paine*, it being a reply to the New York *Observer's* attack upon the "Author-Hero of the Revolution."

§ 9.

Not long after the inauguration of Hayes, Ingersoll's friends, including the entire congressional delegation from Illinois, requested the president to appoint Ingersoll ambassador to Germany; but, pending the executive's decision in the matter, Ingersoll called upon Mr. Evarts, the secretary of state, and asked that his name be not considered in connection with the Berlin mission, *under any circumstances whatever*, stating, at the same time, "that there was no place in the gift of the administration" which he would accept.

That the matter afforded him no little amusement is shown by the following extract from a letter to Dr. Moncure D. Conway, then resident in London:—

"You have probably seen by the despatches that I have declined the mission. The religious press raised a most lugubrious howl of pious anguish. Hypocrites of the secular papers joined with the true believers in denouncing the appointment. It was laughable to see the panic occasioned by so small a matter. I was anxious to see what would be said. Upon the whole, the comments of the leading papers were very gratifying indeed. Not so much because they were full of kindness to me, but for the reason that they took the ground that religion was purely a personal matter with which the public had no right to meddle, one way or the other."

His name was also mentioned with reference to the Paris mission and the position of attorney-general, and, in Illinois, with reference to a United States senatorship.

§ 10.

In November of this year, he removed to Washington. Twenty years before, he left the provincial and slumberous confines of Shawneetown, that his intellectual and artistic faculties, his forensic and oratorical genius, might attain, in the far more opportune fields of Peoria, their full development. They had done this. A student from boyhood,—an insatiable reader and investigator from his later youth,—it was in Peoria that he had become wholly alive to the great truths,—to the beauty and sublimity of the mental world,—and

that all his powers and attributes had become a unified and coherent force. There, he had made the greatest intellects of the world,—the philosophers, statesmen, inventors, poets, dramatists, novelists, and scientists of all ages,—his constant companions. There, his political, religious, and philosophical opinions had taken definite form. There, he had laid the foundation broad and deep. Not only this: upon that foundation, he had stood the uncompromising champion of both physical and intellectual liberty, had won the honors of the soldier, had stood in the political arena unsullied and incorruptible, had stood peerless at the bar, and, as an orator, had been crowned with fame. In Peoria, he had written not only his first lecture, but one of his very greatest, *The Liberty of Man, Woman, and Child.* There, he had first practised and expounded that social and domestic philosophy which was to make him the universal champion of the fireside, and the friend of the unfortunate—the poor, the imprisoned, the wretched, the despised. To his fellow-citizens, he was nature's nobleman—the pride and idol of the community. He was respected by strangers, liked by acquaintances, loved by friends. Naturally, therefore, upon his departure for the still wider fields of the national capital, regret in Peoria not only, but in the Prairie State, was general and profound.

CHAPTER V.

FROM EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-FIVE

IN 1878 Ingersoll wrote his *Robert Burns*, a lecture. It was published posthumously, the unrevised original "notes" of it being found among the orator's papers.

Robert Ingersoll adored Robert Burns; but it was doubtless quite another circumstance that prompted Rev. Henry Ward Beecher to propose as an epitaph for the Great Agnostic the hallowed name of "the ploughman poet."

Ingersoll once said:—

> " * * * the first man that let up the curtain in my mind, that ever opened a blind, that ever allowed a little sunshine to straggle in, was Robert Burns. I went to get my shoes mended, and I had to go with them. And I had to wait till they were done. * * *
>
> "When I went into the shop of the old Scotch shoemaker he was reading a book, and when he took my shoes in hand I took his book, which was 'Robert Burns.' In a few days I had a copy; and, indeed, gentlemen, from that time if 'Burns' had been destroyed I could have restored more than half of it. It was in my mind day and night." (xii 171)

And he continued, in a metaphorical strain typically illustrative of his wonderfully epigrammatic critical powers:—

"Burns you know is a little valley, not very wide, but full of sunshine; a little stream runs down making music over the rocks, and children play upon the banks; narrow roads overrun with vines, covered with blossoms, happy children, the hum of bees, and little birds pour out their hearts and enrich the air. That is Burns." (xii 172)

In further description of the first impression which the latter made upon him, he elsewhere said:—

"I was familiar with the writings of the devout and insincere, the pious and petrified, the pure and heartless. Here was a natural honest man. I knew the works of those who regarded all nature as depraved, and who looked upon love as the legacy and perpetual witness of original sin. Here was a man who plucked joy from the mire, made goddesses of peasant girls, and enthroned the honest man. One whose sympathy, with loving arms, embraced all forms of suffering life, who hated slavery of every kind, who was as natural as heaven's blue, with humor kindly as an autumn day, with wit as sharp as Ithuriel's spear, and scorn that blasted like the simoon's breath. A man who loved this world, this life, the things of every day, and placed above all else the thrilling ecstacies of human love.

"I read and read again with rapture, tears and smiles, feeling that a great heart was throbbing in the lines." (iv 37)

The lecture (which begins by placing Burns next to Shakespeare) considers, with rare poetic insight, the essentials of poetry; contrasts the "educated talent" of Tennyson with the "real genius" of Burns; and reviews, in a spirit of pathos and worshipful tenderness that is divine, the poet's life,—"from the little house of clay with one room where he was born, to the little house with one room where he now sleeps."

It is a favorite assertion of the literati, that

orators do not produce prose—(As a matter of fact, prose is about all that most of them do produce!); and Ingersoll is not generally recognized as a literary critic. Nevertheless, his comparison of Burns and Tennyson is at once one of the most masterly pieces of prose, and one of the most just, sympathetic, and illuminating pieces of criticism, to be found in English letters.

Ingersoll was abroad this year, for the second and last time, visiting England, Scotland, and France; and it was on August 19th, during his sojourn at the birthplace of Burns, that he wrote the following poem, with which the lecture concludes:—

"THE BIRTHPLACE OF BURNS.

"Though Scotland boasts a thousand names
Of patriot, king and peer,
The noblest, grandest of them all
Was loved and cradled here:
Here lived the gentle peasant-prince,
The loving cotter-king,
Compared with whom the greatest lord
Is but a titled thing.

"'Tis but a cot roofed in with straw,
A hovel made of clay;
One door shuts out the snow and storm,
One window greets the day:
And yet I stand within this room
And hold all thrones in scorn;
For here, beneath this lowly thatch,
Love's sweetest bard was born.

"Within this hallowed hut I feel
Like one who clasps a shrine,
When the glad lips at last have touched
The something deemed divine.
And here the world through all the years,
As long as day returns,
The tribute of its love and tears
Will pay to Robert Burns."

It bespeaks a praiseworthy mental breadth in at least two adherents to the faith which both Burns and Ingersoll unreservedly condemned, that Mr. John E. Milholland, of New York, and *Ian Maclaren* (Rev. Dr. John Watson) were instrumental in securing for this poem its rightful place on the walls of the Burns cottage at Alloway.

Their action came about, as follows. On a visit to Ayr, Mr. Milholland was given a copy of the poem, in ordinary print, minus the name of its author. Resenting the literary wrong thus being perpetrated, he took with him, on a subsequent visit, a photographic copy of the original manuscript, on cardboard, with marginal portraits of Burns and Ingersoll. With this, he appealed to his friend Dr. Watson, asking that he call a meeting of the board of management at Ayr to consider the matter. Dr. Watson responded, with the result that the photographic copy of the poem, as just described, was officially accepted.

§ 2.

When Mary Livingston Ingersoll passed into

the dark and silent valley, on December 2, 1835, not knowing that, in the chubby little armful impatiently wondering at her tearful clasp—so long—her kisses, so many and so tender, she had dowered mankind with the noblest of the century, she left behind another child to whom her tears, her kisses, her strange white stillness, were not quite so wonderful, yet—wonderful! Why did mamma "sleep" so long? He would soon be four years old—would mamma be "asleep" on that day? Perhaps not. But on December 12th little Robert, prattling, played with his homely toys, while Ebon Clark Ingersoll stood silent and looked on—wondering. In a little while, both knew that mamma would not wake again—that she would always lie still and cold; and this thought kept their hearts warm to each other. "Love is a flower that grows on the edge of the grave."

And so, from day to day, from year to year,—here and there,—in sunshine and in shadow, with the memory of mother to guide them, "Clark" and "Robin," as they came to call each other in almost worshipful tenderness, played and studied, struggled and sorrowed, together. Together they spent those gloomy orthodox Sabbaths, when liberty died out with day on Saturday, and was forgotten of all but childhood until the sun sullenly retired on Sunday. Together they listened to the frightful and dreary dissertations of orthodoxy, afterwards

discussing them until, upon all of the questions involved, they thought substantially as one, and, of course, substantially as the preacher did not.

It is surprising that if, in matters theological, one of these brothers was the more radical, it was "Clark." Probably this was due to a temperamental difference; for, where his more gifted brother would argue with the orthodox, "Clark" would refrain from the discussion of dogmas the falsity of which, he felt, ought to be perfectly transparent to every one. He was in unqualified agreement with the dictum of Thomas Paine, that "to argue with a man who has renounced his reason is like giving medicine to the dead." But in the light of the preceding, we can imagine how ideal must have been the sympathies of brothers occupying so high an intellectual plane as "Clark" and "Robin." Between their minds, as between their hearts, was a golden and inseverable bond.

When, therefore, they began to tread ambition's upward path, they were hand in hand. Together they went to the bar at Mount Vernon—into practice—into politics—to success. In these larger relations, their mutual devotion remained absolute. Thus Robert refused to accept any office in the district in which "Clark" was "running" for Congress; and while Robert himself was being talked of as a candidate for the governorship, he visited Chicago and engaged in an altercation with Horace White, of the *Tribune*, over a published

article concerning "Clark's" official course in Washington.

Next to Eva Ingersoll herself, "Clark" was Robert's most loving critic. In the old days,—long before the latter's genius soared afar on the wings of recognition,—"Clark" was clearly conscious of the divine fire that kindled and illumined the great soul beside him. And when, at the Cincinnati convention, Robert, already the oratorical wonder of a state, became, in those few indescribable moments, the oratorical wonder of the nation, "Clark" was the first to clasp his brother's hands, in inexpressible pride and joy. Another occasion, a month later, brought the following:—

"LAW OFFICE OF E. C. INGERSOLL,
"810 F ST.,
"WASHINGTON, D.C.,
"July 11, 1876.

"EVER DEAREST BROTHER:

"I have just read your grand oration delivered on the 4th.[1] I paid it the tribute of my tears. It is full of sublime utterances and golden truths. You are always at the *bed-rock* of things. You think deeper and broader than anybody; and then you are *absolutely untrammeled*! Your thoughts have the irresistible and boundless sweep of the ocean, and the directness of a ray of light. I wish your oration could be read by every human being on the globe! The whole race would be elevated, except those 'robbers called kings,' and those 'hypocrites called priests.' My dear, splendid brother, I cannot tell you how proud I am of you, nor how much I love you. I will meet you in Phila. next Saturday. If you desire to stop at any other hotel than the Girard, let me know.

"With infinite love,
"Your devoted brother
"E. C. INGERSOLL."

[1] Centennial Oration, Peoria, July 4, 1876. See p. 83.

Again, with assurance not only of personal admiration and devotion, but of the admiration and devotion of others :—

"1403 K St.,
"Washington, D. C.,
"April 3, '77.

"Ever Dearest Brother:

"I recd. yours with report of your speech at Chicago. I ran it over hurriedly and saw you had made the best of all your political speeches. I cannot tell you how proud I am of you. Your name and praise are in the mouth of every one I meet. I put the paper in my pocket and went over to the White House. I told Rogers about it, and he insisted that I should leave it with him, so he might read it to the Pres't. I left it with him, but on condition he would return it to me. Have not called since, but will to-night, and get it. Then I will read it all with pleasure. Before going over to the White House, I received a telegram, addressed to you, from S————, saying, in substance: 'Can I rely on you to write biographical sketch of Hayes, for cyclopaedia? Would furnish you the *few* facts necessary, and you could embellish them.' Hayes wished me to send you his best regards, etc., and Rogers also. Gen'l Sherman called the other evening, at the house, on you and me. I had a pleasant visit with him, and as he was leaving he said: 'Give my *love* to your brother when you write.' I am lonesome without you, and am pretty blue. When shall I hold you to my heart again?

"Ever your devoted brother
"Clark."

On Robert's part were the same beautiful manifestations of affection. Thus, as the dedication of an edition of lectures, addresses, etc., he wrote :—

"To Ebon C. Ingersoll, my brother, from whose lips I heard the first applause, and with whose name I wish my own associated until both are forgotten, this volume is dedicated."

Whether any other two brothers ever loved each

other as intensely as they, cannot, of course, be stated; but that no other two ever loved more intensely is at least morally certain.

When, therefore, on May 31, 1879, death suddenly stilled the heart of Ebon Clark Ingersoll, it visited his brother with a grief more poignant and overwhelming than he had ever experienced, not only, but a grief that few brothers, as such, have ever known. It was only after great effort in the mastery of his feelings, that he was able to undertake the fulfilment of the loving compact made years before; and as he stood at last by his brother's bier, his grief, frequently welling up in tearful interference with his utterance, finally compelled an interruption more pathetic even than his words:—

"Dear Friends: I am going to do that which the dead oft promised he would do for me.

"The loved and loving brother, husband, father, friend, died where manhood's morning almost touches noon, and while the shadows still were falling toward the west.

"He had not passed on life's highway the stone that marks the highest point; but being weary for a moment, he lay down by the wayside, and using his burden for a pillow, fell into that dreamless sleep that kisses down his eyelids still. While yet in love with life and raptured with the world, he passed to silence and pathetic dust.

"Yet, after all, it may be best, just in the happiest, sunniest hour of all the voyage, while eager winds are kissing every sail, to dash against the unseen rock, and in an instant hear the billows roar above a sunken ship. For whether in mid sea or 'mong the breakers of the farther shore, a wreck at last must mark the end of each and all. And every life, no matter if its every hour is rich with love and every moment jeweled with a joy, will, at its close, become a tragedy as sad and deep and dark as can be woven of the warp and woof of mystery and death.

"This brave and tender man in every storm of life was oak and rock; but in the sunshine he was vine and flower. He was the friend of all heroic souls. He climbed the heights, and left all superstitions far below, while on his forehead fell the golden dawning of the grander day.

"He loved the beautiful, and was with color, form, and music touched to tears. He sided with the weak, the poor, and wronged, and lovingly gave alms. With loyal heart and with the purest hands he faithfully discharged all public trusts.

"He was a worshiper of liberty, a friend of the oppressed. A thousand times I have heard him quote these words: '*For Justice all place a temple, and all season, summer.*' He believed that happiness is the only good, reason the only torch, justice the only worship, humanity the only religion, and love the only priest. He added to the sum of human joy; and were every one to whom he did some loving service to bring a blossom to his grave, he would sleep to-night beneath a wilderness of flowers.

"Life is a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights. We cry aloud, and the only answer is the echo of our wailing cry. From the voiceless lips of the unreplying dead there comes no word; but in the night of death hope sees a star and listening love can hear the rustle of a wing.

"He who sleeps here, when dying, mistaking the approach of death for the return of health, whispered with his latest breath, 'I am better now.' Let us believe, in spite of doubts and dogmas, of fears and tears, that these dear words are true of all the countless dead.

"The record of a generous life runs like a vine around the memory of our dead, and every sweet, unselfish act is now a perfumed flower.

"And now, to you, who have been chosen, from among the many men he loved, to do the last sad office for the dead, we give his sacred dust.

"Speech cannot contain our love. There was, there is, no gentler, stronger, manlier man." (xii 389) [1]

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[1] This tribute was delivered at the funeral, which took place from the late residence of the deceased, No. 1403 K Street, Northwest, Washington, on June 2, 1879, and which was one of the largest gatherings of distinguished persons ever seen at a funeral in the national capital. The pall-bearers were: Senators William B. Allison, James

§ 3.

On the evening of November 13th, at the Grant banquet, Palmer House, Chicago, Ingersoll responded to the toast: "The volunteer soldiers of the Union army, whose valor and patriotism saved to the world 'a government of the people, by the people, and for the people.'" Among the speakers (Sherman being toastmaster) were Grant, Logan, Woodford, Pope, Wilson, Vilas, and *Mark Twain*. Therefore, the task of responding to the twelfth toast was one of unusual difficulty. Ingersoll's "reputation as the first orator in America," said the Indianapolis *Journal*, editorially, "caused the distinguished audience to expect a wonderful display of oratory from him. He proved fully equal to the occasion, and delivered a speech of wonderful eloquence, brilliancy, and power. * * * The speech is both an oration and a poem. It bristles with ideas, and sparkles with epigrammatic expressions. It is full of thoughts that breathe, and words that burn. The closing sentences read like blank verse. It is wonderful oratory, marvelous eloquence. Colonel Ingersoll fully sustained his reputation as the finest orator in America."

G. Blaine, David Davis, Daniel W. Voorhees, and A. S. Paddock; Representatives James A. Garfield, Thomas Q. Boyd, and Adlai E. Stevenson; ex-Representative Jere Wilson and Hon. Ward H. Lamon.

And the Chicago *Inter-Ocean* observed, also editorially, that, when he "rose, * * * a large part of the audience rose with him; and the cheering was long and loud. Colonel Ingersoll may fairly be regarded as the foremost orator of America; and there was the keenest interest to hear him, after all the brilliant speeches that had preceded. * * * [He] had not proceeded far when the old fire broke out, and flashing metaphor, bold denunciation, and all the rich imagery and poetical beauty which mark his great efforts stood revealed before the delighted listeners. Long before the last word was uttered, all doubt as to the ability of the great orator to sustain himself had departed; and, rising to their feet, the audience cheered until the hall rang with shouts. Like Henry, 'the forest-born Demosthenes, whose thunder shook the Philip of the Seas,' Ingersoll still held the crown within his grasp."

And why should he not have held it? That no other American had lived who could have made such a masterful address on such an occasion, is as certain as that no other American than Poe could have written *The Raven*. However, that no other American orator could have approached Ingersoll then, is no more certain than that he himself had produced far greater effects before, and that he produced far greater effects afterwards.

But, even with his own magic touchstone to guide us, what shall we say of this!—

"The North, filled with intelligence and wealth—children of liberty—marshaled her hosts and asked only for a leader. From civil life a man, silent, thoughtful, poised and calm, stepped forth, and with the lips of victory voiced the Nation's first and last demand: 'Unconditional and immediate surrender.'" (xii 81)

A man, silent, thoughtful, poised and calm. In such a setting, is this a portrait of Grant? or is it a blurred and faded tracing of somebody else?

And when will this vine wither on the tomb of the great liberator?—

"Lincoln, greatest of our mighty dead, whose memory is as gentle as the summer air when reapers sing amid the gathered sheaves * * * ." (xii 83)

If all the rhetorics and all the rest of Ingersoll were blotted out, where else than to the following could we send the student for an example of perfectly balanced hyperbole—the hyperbole of patriotism?—

"Blood was water, money was leaves, and life was only common air until one flag floated over a Republic without a master and without a slave." (xii 83)

But shall this gem of tragedy and pathos be dimmed with aught but tears? Shall it be marred with the sacrilegious pen of rhetorical analysis?—

"And now let us drink to the volunteers—to those who sleep in unknown, sunken graves, whose names are only in the hearts of those they loved and left—of those who only hear in happy dreams the footsteps of return. Let us drink to those who died where lipless famine mocked at want; to all the maimed whose scars give modesty a tongue; to all who dared and gave to chance the care and keeping of

their lives; to all the living and to all the dead,—to Sherman, to Sheridan, and to Grant, the laureled soldier of the world, and last, to Lincoln, whose loving life, like a bow of peace, spans and arches all the clouds of war." (xii 84)

§ 4.

During this year, Ingersoll also published *Some Mistakes of Moses*, one of the ablest (and the longest) of his lectures, declaring that "the destroyer of weeds, thistles and thorns is a benefactor whether he soweth grain or not."

On January 24th of the following year (1880), he delivered in Washington the *Suffrage Address*, a plea for universal suffrage and self-government for the District of Columbia.

He participated in the campaign of Garfield, addressing in Wall Street, New York, on October 28th, an assemblage which, according to the New York *Times*, words were "entirely inadequate to describe," and which "never was equaled in point of numbers, respectability, or enthusiasm, even during the excitement caused by the outbreak of the Rebellion."

Two days later, he addressed what was, in the language of the New York *Herald*, "the greatest political audience that * * * ever assembled in Brooklyn." On this occasion (in the Academy of Music), he was introduced by Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, who said, in part:—

"I am not accustomed to preside at meetings like this; only the

exigency of the times could induce me to do it. I am not here, either, to make a speech, but more especially to introduce the eminent orator of the evening. * * * I stand not as a minister, but as a man among men, pleading the cause of fellowship and equal rights. We are not here as mechanics, as artists, merchants, or professional men, but as fellow-citizens. The gentleman who will speak to-night is in no conventicle or church. He is to speak to a great body of citizens, and I take the liberty of saying that I respect him as the man that for a full score and more of years has worked for the right in the great, broad field of humanity, and for the cause of human rights. I consider it an honor to extend to him, as I do now, the warm, earnest, right hand of fellowship."

As Beecher spoke this sentence, he turned to Ingersoll and extended his hand, the palms of the two meeting with an audible clasp.

"I now introduce to you," continued the great Christian divine, leading the Great Agnostic forward, "a man who—and I say it not flatteringly—is the most brilliant speaker of the English tongue of all men on this globe. But as under the brilliancy of the blaze of light we find the living coals of fire, under the lambent flow of his wit and magnificent antithesis we find the glorious flame of genius and honest thought. Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. Ingersoll."

"The orator," continues the *Herald*, "spoke in his best vein, and his audience was responsive to the wonderful magical spell of his eloquence. And when his last glowing utterance had lost its echo in the wild storm of applause that rewarded him at the close, Mr. Beecher again stepped forward, and, as if to emphasize the earnestness of his previous compliments, proposed a vote of thanks to the distinguished speaker. The vote was a roar of affirmation, whose voice was not stronger when

Mr. Ingersoll, in turn, called upon the audience to give three cheers for the great preacher. They were given, and repeated three times over. Men waved their hats and umbrellas; ladies, of whom there were many hundreds present, waved their handkerchiefs; and men, strangers to each other, shook hands with the fervency of brotherhood. It was indeed a strange scene, and the principal actors in it seemed, not less than the most wildly excited man there, to appreciate its peculiar import and significance."

Ingersoll's original anti-theological labors during this year were comprised in the publication of the lecture *What Must We Do To Be Saved?*

In 1881 came *Some Reasons Why* (a lecture) and *The Great Infidels* (also a lecture), which latter caused clergymen, throughout the country, to renew their attacks upon the Great Agnostic. This lecture was posthumously published from unrevised "notes."

§ 5.

During the same year, Ingersoll was requested by the *North American Review* to write an article on Christianity, the article to be published in the *Review* if some one would furnish a reply.[1] The

[1] Not long after this, but before he knew who was to reply to him, Ingersoll was in Philadelphia, and chanced to meet Judge Jeremiah S. Black, with whom he was well acquainted.

"I have a good mind to run up one side of you and down the other, on that hobby of yours, Colonel," remarked the Judge.

full and exact conditions were: (1) That Ingersoll should write an article; (2) that some one should answer it; (3) that Ingersoll should have the privilege of replying; (4) that one, two, or three others might answer him; and (5) that Ingersoll should reply, thereby closing the controversy. Accordingly, Ingersoll wrote the first article, entitling it, *Is All of the Bible Inspired?* Not until afterwards did he know who was to write the second. Many unsuccessful efforts were made by the *Review* to obtain a reply from some representative Christian theologian or thinker. Among those approached was Beecher, who, after reading the proof-sheets of Ingersoll's article (entitled as above indicated), declined to answer it, explaining, in substance, that, while he did not wholly approve of Ingersoll's methods, he agreed with so much of his thought, that an answer from him (Beecher) would be useless. He advised the *Review* to secure a reply from some orthodox clergyman or college president. Afterwards, an article was written by the late Judge Jeremiah S. Black, of the Philadelphia bar. Ingersoll's article and Black's reply were published together, under the title, *The Christian Religion*, in the August issue of the *Review*, Black having induced the manage-

"Why don't you, Judge? We could have some fun," retorted Ingersoll. "But while you are running up one side of me and down the other, I will run down one side of you and up the other."

This amusing anecdote, which illustrates the never-failing humor and the lightning-like wit of Ingersoll, was related to the author by a third gentleman who was present.

ment of that periodical, without Ingersoll's consent or knowledge, to change the title of the latter's contribution. Ingersoll's rejoinder of fifty-eight pages, which, it is of literary interest to note, was dictated to a stenographer in an almost incredibly short space of time, and published practically word for word as dictated, appeared in the November number of the *Review;* "and Judge Black was informed," wrote the editor afterwards, "that the same number of pages of the next issue would be at his disposal," "it being deemed inadvisable to fill" any single number of "the *Review* with the discussion of the one question." "But the Judge could not be induced," continued the editor, "to write a second article, although strongly urged to do so." This, Ingersoll deeply regretted. "Black published his reply in some Philadelphia paper," wrote Ingersoll, subsequently, "claiming that he had not been fairly treated by the *Review*."[1] The latter then secured a "reply" from Professor George Park Fisher, of Yale University, but only with the express stipulation, that Ingersoll be not permitted to rejoin.[2]

[1] "It was one of the mistakes of Jere Black's life that he got into that fight with the Colonel. I knew Black—he frequently came to see me in Washington—was a good fellow—but in that discussion he met, as he deserved, with the most scathing chastisement." Walt Whitman, in *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, by Horace Traubel, p. 82.

[2] This controversy, as far as it proceeded in the *Review*, will be found in full in *The Works of Ingersoll, Dresden Edition*, vol. vi., pp. 3-117.

§ 6.

In viewing the lives of the great, we are apt to dwell with insistence upon such occurrences as have already laid strong claim to popular attention, while many others that, carefully considered, disclose the real mental and moral constitution of the individual concerned are but slightingly mentioned, if not entirely ignored. We should commit ourselves to this error in viewing the life of Ingersoll, if we failed to note, somewhat at length, an incident that took place in Washington on January 8, 1882. It is doubtful whether there is any other which more clearly reveals his innate sympathy and tenderness; and certainly there is no other which more clearly demonstrates his capacity for fitting expression.

A little child had suddenly died. It belonged to parents who were far below Ingersoll "in the social scale"; but they were his friends. So, when the people who had been invited gathered around the open grave in the Congressional Cemetery, late in the afternoon, he was there. The little casket rested on the trestles. Nature had conspired with death to deepen the tragic gloom. Gray, cold mist obscured the horizon, and hung like a lowering pall overhead. A fine, slow rain was falling, its monotonous whisper intensifying the painful silence —broken only by the sobs of the mother. A few feet from her, with bared head, stood Ingersoll.

The undertaker, approaching the latter, addressed him in words inaudible to others. The Great Agnostic shook his head, but immediately inquired, "How Mr. ——— desire it?" The undertaker gave an affirmative nod, while from the soldier father came a look of earnest appeal—a look that meant far more than he knew. It meant that the man who had led a regiment to battle, who had heroically swayed the most unruly of political conventions, who had captured countless jurors, who had thrilled vast audiences with the wildest enthusiasm—it meant that the man who was accustomed to being the dominant figure in scenes of such magnitude—was now called to perform an office the delicacy of which made it their finest attribute. It meant, moreover, that the man who had done more than any other individual in history to destroy that which, in a vast majority of his fellow-countrymen at least, was the only solace in the hour of death, was now called to enlarge the hope of a mother in the darkest moment of that hour.

All heads were bowed. Ingersoll stepped quickly to the side of the little grave, and in a voice whose eloquence none and cadence can be realized by those only who were present, said:—

"My friends: I know how easy it is to say a few words and yet I want to take from every grave its fear. Here in the earth where the seed sleeps all should be brave enough to meet what all the dead have met. The future has been filled with dust and pierced by the keenest pain. From the wounds

tree of life the buds and blossoms fall with ripened fruit, and in the common bed of earth, patriarchs and babes sleep side by side.

"Why should we fear that which will come to all that is? We cannot tell, we do not know, which is the greater blessing—life or death. We cannot say that death is not a good. We do not know whether the grave is the end of this life, or the door of another, or whether the night here is not somewhere else a dawn. Neither can we tell which is the more fortunate—the child dying in its mother's arms, before its lips have learned to form a word, or he who journeys all the length of life's uneven road, painfully taking the last slow steps with staff and crutch.

"Every cradle asks us 'Whence?' and every coffin 'Whither?' The poor barbarian, weeping above his dead, can answer these questions just as well as the robed priest of the most authentic creed. The tearful ignorance of the one, is as consoling as the learned and unmeaning words of the other. No man, standing where the horizon of a life has touched a grave, has any right to prophesy a future filled with pain and tears.

"May be that death gives all there is of worth to life. If those we press and strain within our arms could never die, perhaps that love would wither from the earth. May be this common fate treads from out the paths between our hearts the weeds of selfishness and hate. And I had rather live and love where death is king, than have eternal life where love is not. Another life is nought, unless we know and love again the ones who love us here.

"They who stand with breaking hearts around this little grave, need have no fear. The larger and the nobler faith in all that is, and is to be, tells us that death, even at its worst, is only perfect rest. We know that through the common wants of life—the needs and duties of each hour—their grief will lessen day by day, until at last this grave will be to them a place of rest and peace—almost of joy. There is for them this consolation: The dead do not suffer. If they live again, their lives will surely be as good as ours. We have no fear. We are all children of the same mother, and the same fate awaits us all. We, too, have our religion, and it is this: Help for the living—Hope for the dead." (xii 399)

The irksomeness of rhetorical criticism may here be dispensed with; but it is unavoidable to ask a

question: What other orator, ancient or modern, with one-half of Ingersoll's power in the rostrum, could have planted on the grave of a child a flower as delicate as this?

§ 7.

Dr. Talmage, of Brooklyn, having preached a series of six sermons in which he adversely reviewed some of the Great Agnostic's lectures, Ingersoll published, in April, 1882, *Six Interviews with Robert G. Ingersoll on Six Sermons by the Rev. T. DeWitt Talmage, D.D., To Which Is Added a Talmagian Catechism.* Throughout this exhaustive work of 430 pages, Ingersoll pursues the great divine with kindly humor, but with logic as merciless as it is irresistible, and concludes by ironically setting forth, "in the form of a shorter catechism, for use in Sunday-schools, the pith and marrow of what he [Talmage] has been pleased to say."

§ 8.

In this year, May Thirtieth must have been to Ingersoll a day as proud and satisfying as it was memorable and sad. It was no informal occasion —his was no perfunctory duty—when, as the oratorical choice, and the unanimously invited guest, of the Grand Army of the Republic, he arose in the Academy of Music, New York, to voice a nation's gratitude to a nation's dead.

The Grand Army of the Republic knew, that Ingersoll had "but one sentiment for soldiers: Cheers for the living, tears for the dead." They also knew, that there was "but one" man with the intellectual amplitude, the historic grasp, the wealth of imagination and feeling—in short, the brain and heart—to lay upon the hallowed graves of the founders and defenders of the Great Republic a fitting wreath—Robert G. Ingersoll. But some of his enemies, that is, some people who did not know him, sought to prevent his being invited as the orator of the occasion. Hearing of this, he begged the committee in charge to consider the matter well and long. They did; and the better and longer they considered, the more imperatively necessary seemed the following telegram to him: "Our committee unanimously renew our invitation, and urge your acceptance. All are enthusiastic on the subject. We want Rogers and the sword of Bunker Hill." Ingersoll's acceptance also brought over the wire this flash of enthusiasm: "Glory hallelujah! The day is ours!"

The audience, which, within a few minutes after the opening of the doors, filled every seat, both off and on the stage, was one of the most appreciative and distinguished that had ever gathered in the Academy, President Arthur, Secretary Folger, Attorney-General Brewster, Senator Conkling, Generals Grant, Hancock, Aspinwall, Butterfield, Barnum, and Porter, and Carl Schurz, George

William Curtis, and many other prominent statesmen, soldiers, orators, and publicists being present.

Received with an ardent ovation, Ingersoll sounded the very depths of his theme, while he easily encompassed, and even transcended, its magnificence. Upon its sublimest heights fell the sunlight of his genius. From "the first ships whose prows were gilded by the western sun," he painted in poetic panorama the history of the Great Republic, until "the heavens bent above and domed a land without a serf, a servant, or a slave." By himself and others, his address was termed (and has since been published as) a *Decoration Day Oration*. This is a misnomer. It was far more than a mere "Decoration Day oration": it was an epic prose-poem. It was never equaled, even by Ingersoll himself, on any similar occasion. But its further consideration here is impossible. In the atmosphere of biography, there is no room nor light for this angel of eloquence to spread its golden wings.[1]

§ 9.

From an early date in this year (1882) until the

[1] The proceeds of this "oration," about $4,000, were given to the Grand Army of the Republic, by which they were devoted to charity and benevolence—to disabled soldiers, their widows and orphans, the Garfield statue-fund, etc. When remuneration was suggested to Ingersoll, who, of course, as orator of the occasion, had earned the receipts, he said: "I couldn't talk about dead soldiers for money." He refused to accept even traveling expenses.

middle of the next, Ingersoll was the dominant figure in the most noted legal case that has occurred in the Western Hemisphere, and probably the most remarkable, for intricacy and magnitude, in the history of criminal jurisprudence. Stephen W. Dorsey, formerly a United States senator from Arkansas, his brother John W. Dorsey, Thomas J. Brady (second assistant postmaster-general), and four others were indicted by a grand jury, at Washington, under the Revised Statutes of the United States, for conspiring to defraud the latter, in connection with certain contracts and subcontracts for carrying the mails in a number of the western states, on what were known as "star-routes." The two trials that ensued were known as the "star-route trials." There were over ten thousand of these star-routes. The defendants were interested in 134 separate contracts and subcontracts; and it was alleged that the Government had been defrauded to the extent of nearly five million dollars. Considering the size of this sum of public money, and the social and official prominence of some of the defendants, I feel safe in leaving almost wholly to the judgment and the imagination of such readers as have no knowledge on the subject the formation of an adequate conception of the profound and widespread interest that was manifested in the case. Of the magnitude of its two trials, we may, perhaps, approximately judge by the length of the records, and by

the costs involved. The former, as printed and filed in the Department of Justice, occupy between nine and ten thousand roomy pages,—probably the longest records in the annals of criminal procedure, —while the costs have been officially estimated at $1,200,000.

The first trial began on June 1st, in the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia, Attorney-General Brewster and others representing the Government; Ingersoll and others, the defendants. Ingersoll was the immediate counsel for Stephen W. and John W. Dorsey. The trial occupied nearly three and one-half months. At the unanimous request of his legal associates in the case, Ingersoll made the final appeal to the jury, for the defense, beginning at noon on September 5th, and ending at noon on the 6th. As large an audience as had been able to get within range of his voice hung upon his every word. The jury retired on September 8th, and, on the 11th, after being threatened, by the presiding judge, with an invocation of the provisions of the ancient common law in such cases, —namely, deprivation of food, drink, and place of sleep,—rendered a "mixed verdict," acquitting one of the defendants, convicting two, and disagreeing as to the other four. Among the latter were Ingersoll's immediate clients, Stephen W. and John W. Dorsey. This verdict was set aside, and the first Monday in December was fixed as the date on which to begin the second trial.

Meantime, public interest in the case was even more intense than ever. Thousands of citizens of every grade and vocation, including editors of influential journals, in all parts of the country, who certainly had never perused the indictment, and who probably had never heard or read a full page of the real testimony, were incessantly clamoring for a verdict of guilt.

In this connection, the following extract from a subsequent interview with Ingersoll is especially apropos :—

"Question.—In your experience as a lawyer what was the most unique case in which you were ever engaged ?

"Answer.—The Star Route trial. Every paper in the country, but one, was against the defense, and that one was a little sheet owned by one of the defendants. I received a note from a man living in a little town in Ohio criticising me for defending the accused. In reply I wrote that I supposed he was a sensible man and that he, of course, knew what he was talking about when he said the accused were guilty; that the Government needed just such men as he, and that he should come to the trial at once and testify. The man wrote back: 'Dear Colonel: I am a ——— fool.'" (viii 539)

In legal and governmental circles at Washington, the wildest excitement prevailed. There were startling rumors and summary doings on every hand.

The second trial began on December 7th and occupied over six months. Ingersoll delivered his opening address to the jury on December 21st, and his closing address on June 13th and 14, 1883. On the following morning, at ten o'clock, a verdict of absolute acquittal was rendered.

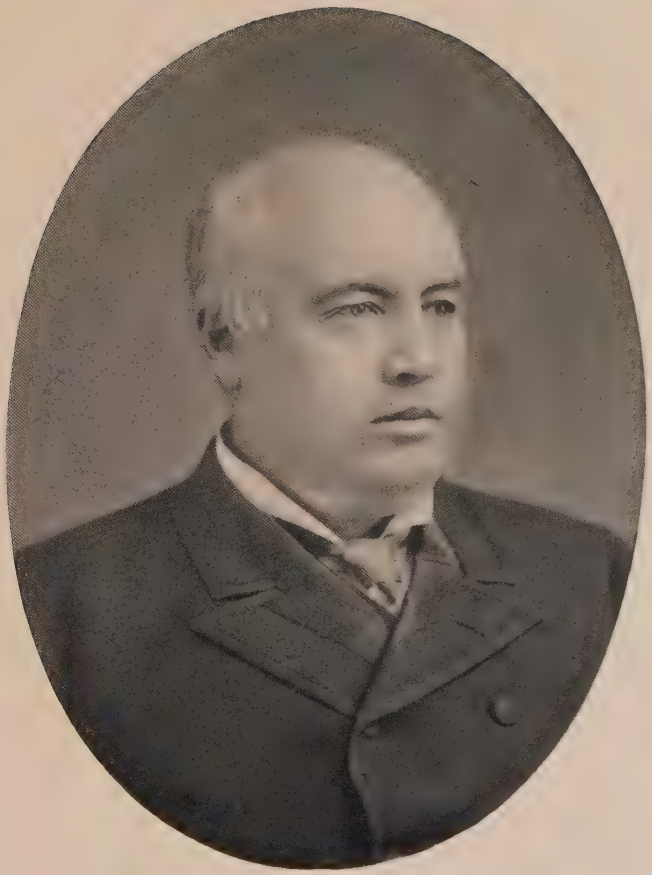
It is no exaggeration to state, that this verdict was the greatest personal victory ever won by an American lawyer. It was so regarded at the time. Hundreds who were present to hear it, while apparently feeling but little anxiety for the actual defendants, were beside themselves with joy on learning that Ingersoll, despite the seemingly overwhelming advantage of the prosecution, had achieved so marvelous a triumph. Indeed, even the dignity of court was impotent to prevent an ovation to the great lawyer. And shortly afterwards, as he rode homeward with his family, through Pennsylvania Avenue, he was so frequently greeted by the people, that he was finally obliged to sit with uncovered head, waving his hands to either side, much after the manner of a conquering hero. Telegrams of congratulation came from all parts of the country. Callers, in an almost unbroken procession, thronged his house during the day, and concluded their manifestations of gladness with a serenade in the evening, when Ingersoll responded in a short speech.

Of the matter and manner of his three addresses (to the juries), covering as they do nearly five hundred pages, little can or need be said. If oratory is to be judged by its immediate effects, perhaps, after all, the members of the last "star-route" jury, unlettered though they may have been, uttered in the memorable words, "We find the defendants not guilty," the highest possible praise of

the addresses concerned. To point out therein any of the countless available examples of masterful exposition; of analysis and portrayal of human character and motive; of perfect logic, keen wit, and flashing repartee; of scathing irony and death-dealing sarcasm; of genial humor and tender pathos —in short, to do more than to enumerate the weapons wielded by the supreme intellectual gladiator in this memorable combat—would be to yield to a temptation that constantly besets the truly appreciative critic of Ingersoll. It does seem pertinent, however, that many people who, because of their superficial knowledge of him, had doubted his depth as a counselor and advocate, departed from court with the ineradicable conviction, that the man whom they had long since conceded to be the most eloquent of American orators was hardly less marvelous for his resourcefulness, his brilliancy, and his profundity, in the law.[1]

Notwithstanding the verdict (on June 15, 1883) of the twelve men who had pondered the indictment and the testimony, and who were solemnly sworn to render a decision in accordance with the evidence and the law, many people who are entirely void of responsibility, and who know little of the testimony, and still less of the evidence, continue to try the "star-route" case with resulting verdicts of guilt!

[1] Judge Wylie, who presided in this case, and who afterwards became an ardent friend of Ingersoll, remarked that the latter was the greatest lawyer whom he had ever met.



1884

(Æt. 51)

From a photograph by Taber, San Francisco.

They also charge Ingersoll with having been a hireling to one of the "guilty" defendants, in consideration of an enormous fee. Ingersoll received no fee whatever. As a matter of fact, he lost not only the better part of two years' time and intellectual labor, but many thousands of dollars in cash, through the failure of Stephen W. Dorsey to meet various financial obligations which he assumed during, and subsequent to, the trials, and for which Ingersoll, by sufferance of abundant good nature, became technically responsible. Such was his reward.—

> "Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back,
> Wherein he puts alms for oblivion,—
> A great-sized monster of ingratitudes—
> Those scraps are good deeds past; which are devoured
> As fast as they are made, forgot as soon
> As done * * * ."

§ 10.

But if ingratitude, and even worse, was to be Ingersoll's portion at the hands of one individual in his own country, something different was preparing at the hands of another individual, in another section of the continent. For, about the time of the closing of the second "star-route" trial, the distinguished explorer Frederick Schwatka, laureate of the Paris Geographical Society, and of the Imperial Geographical Society of Russia, etc., etc., was making his way, in command of the Alaska Exploring Expedition, down the Yukon River.

Between Van Wilczek Valley and old Fort Selkirk, British Northwest Territory, at a point which he thought was situated in the bed of an ancient lake, he came upon a large chain, or cluster, of islands. These he named "Ingersoll Islands," "after Colonel Ingersoll of Washington."

§ 11.

On October 22d Ingersoll delivered in Lincoln Hall, in the latter city, a speech on "Civil Rights," a great number of citizens having met there to express their views concerning the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States in which it is held that the first and second sections of the *Civil Rights Act* are unconstitutional. He was introduced by Frederick Douglass, as "one that loves his fellow-men," Leigh Hunt's famous poem *Abou Ben Adhem*, whom Ingersoll was held to typify, being employed by Douglass as the medium of presenting the humanitarian, orator, and jurist.

Thereupon Ingersoll, the legal anatomist, with the scalpel and tweezers of logic, slowly and calmly dissected the decision before him, weighed it in the balanced scales, pointed out what he believed to be the false reasoning of the great tribunal, and concluded with a characteristic denunciation of the spirit of caste, and a nobly patriotic plea for protection and justice for every citizen, not only abroad but at home. He demonstrated that he,

too, should be remembered as an "expounder of the Constitution."

There was also published during this year, in the Brooklyn *Union*, a lengthy interview in which Ingersoll criticized the Brooklyn divines for their attitude on the tendencies of modern thought.

Two lectures, *Orthodoxy* and *Which Way?* were delivered in 1884, the last concluding with that marvelous peroration:—

"This was.
"This is.
"This shall be."

The latter has since been published as *Night and Morning*, with other prose-poems and selections from his works.

Myth and Miracle was published in 1885. One of his most forceful and charming lectures, it contains the prose-poems *The Warp and Woof* and the *Apostrophe to Liberty*.

§ 12.

In November of this year, for much the same reasons that had impelled him to abandon Peoria, with a preference for Washington, as a place of residence, Ingersoll removed to New York. If it was natural eight years before, that he should abandon for the national capital his much-loved Prairie State, where he had already won the laurel, and whose pride he had become, it was now natural

that he should abandon the national capital for the far wider and more congenial fields of the national metropolis. Natural, to be sure; yet, seemingly, how anomalous—the "Great Agnostic" returning to the place of his baptism! How far from the imagination of fifty years before! Little was it dreamed by that mother whose "sweet, cold face" was to keep his "heart warm through all the changing years." Still less was it dreamed by Rev. John Ingersoll. How distant from his thoughts, as he set out to spread the Christian gospel in the "West," that the motherless child in his arms, born to poverty, adversity, and all that was provincially orthodox, would return, a half-century hence, the central figure of an epoch of intellectual progress—the most unique, and yet the most lovable personality, the wisest and sanest thinker, the most formidable controversialist, of the modern world, and the greatest orator of all time!

CHAPTER VI.

FROM EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-SIX TO EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-EIGHT

INGERSOLL was now in his fifty-third year, when a large majority of geniuses have long since done the most and the best of their work. Astir almost at the dawn, arduously toiling and already producing in the morning, and achieving their greatest before the sun was overhead, they have rested in the calm of the afternoon,—if indeed the night have not too early touched with cooling kiss their tired brow. This is the rule. But nature delights in exceptions. Why we do not know. It may be that she tires of uniformity, of the ceaselessness and invariability of forces, of the inevitableness of atoms and molecules—tires of the feast she has spread for herself—and that of her own ennui, in some miraculous way, the exceptional is born. Whatever the explanation, she made exceptions with Ingersoll,—exceptions in all the periods of life. For he produced practically nothing before his twenty-seventh year: this may be termed the exception of his youth. He produced nothing before his thirty-seventh year that is either

intellectually or artistically comparable to his best: this may be termed the exception of his manhood. He did not reach the sublimest heights of eloquence until he was forty-two years of age; and he did not cease to produce things that were both intellectually and artistically comparable to his best until his death: these may be termed the exceptions of his maturity,—exceptions far more remarkable than either of the others. For, in many respects, both the quantity and the quality of his work considered, his accomplishments during the last fourteen years of his life were greater than those of the preceding twenty. During the fourteen years referred to, he sustained undiminished his former wealth and exuberance, dowering the future with the profoundest, sublimest, and tenderest thoughts, producing many of his most powerful lectures, and, at fifty-eight, his greatest literary masterpiece, *Shakespeare*,—a literary masterpiece despite its being a lecture. Moreover, he did what he had never done before—entered the mental tourney against the ablest and most daring knights and knights-errant of Christendom, finally receiving the coveted prize in the lists of international controversy. Verily might we say of him: His heart "there was no winter in't," and his mind "an autumn 't was that grew the more by reaping."

§ 2.

It was pointed out in the preceding section, that

nature made many exceptions with Ingersoll; and it has been written elsewhere, by an eminent critic, that Ingersoll "was not as other men are." Not only is the latter true in general; it is true in numerous particulars. And had this critic deigned the Great Agnostic entry into the jealously guarded precincts of conventional letters, he certainly would have written thus: "Ingersoll was not as other *literary* men are." For whatever Ingersoll felt, Ingersoll could think and write—anywhere. He did not require seclusion, nor even retirement. He never sought the sequestration of the study—never became a literary convict. He was universally opposed to the penitentiary idea. In its stead, he put the idea of social intercourse, of company. Unless some other than mere literary considerations prevented, he wrote while in the bosom of his family. Many of his productions were written while the conversation of others was in his ears, or while his children were playing about him with toys and pets, the rabbits and kittens actually capering over his manuscript. Perhaps this accounts for the deep and tender notes of human love, the elemental passion, the ripples of laughter, and even the tears, that linger in his lines.

But of all the evidence that might be offered in proof of his capacity for literary production under conditions which undoubtedly would have been fatal to most others whose names will live long in

literature, none is either more typical or interesting than the following. On December 18, 1886, he was traveling, by rail, from New York to Washington, where he was to lecture. "Let's go into the 'smoker,' 'Clint,'" he said, rather suddenly, to his brother-in-law, Mr. Clinton Pinckney Farrell, a constant companion. As soon as the two were reseated, Ingersoll took from his pocket some old envelopes or bits of paper and a pencil and began to write. After continuing uninterruptedly for a considerable time, he handed his rough manuscript to Mr. Farrell and asked: "Do you think that will do for 'Harry'?" Would it "do for 'Harry'"? Yes: it would "do for 'Harry'"—it would do for posterity; for it was *Life*, the greatest prose-poem, and one of the greatest poems in any form, that had been written by an American. It was a laurel fit for Shakespeare's brow—a priceless gem whose luster praise could only dim. The production was immediately published in the Christmas number of the New York *Dramatic Mirror*, the editor, Mr. Harrison Grey Fiske, having requested his great friend to write something for the paper.

§ 3.

The year 1887 afforded an opportunity for Ingersoll to perform an act that put still another star in his crown of fame—an act that, even had it been the only one of his life, would have entitled

him to the gratitude and affection, not only of every genuine American,—every enlightened believer in the sacred principles upon which this Republic rests,—but of every other real friend of physical and mental liberty.

During the summer of 1886, Mr. Charles B. Reynolds arranged an itinerary with a view of delivering rationalistic lectures, or of holding free-thought meetings, at various places in New Jersey. His invitations to the public were extended through the usual media of newspapers, circulars, posters, and so forth; and the resultant meetings, attended by some of the best citizens, were peaceful, orderly, and respectable, when, indeed, they were not rendered otherwise by a minor element of bias and bigotry, unrestrained by local officials. Mr. Reynolds encountered no great difficulty from that source, however, until he reached Boonton. There, while speaking,—while peacefully availing himself of the very first rights of an American citizen,—his tent was besieged and destroyed by a mob; he was personally attacked, with all kinds of missiles; and he undoubtedly would have sustained serious physical injury had he not succeeded, during the confusion, in evading his persecutors and summarily quitting the town. An effort to obtain legal redress by suing the latter for damages, merely elicited the shamefully hypocritical subterfuge of a countercharge of disturbing the peace. But the authorities evidently being

blessed with ample precaution, if with nothing more, "the issue was never joined." Some time after, but before the excitement in Boonton had subsided, Mr. Reynolds appeared in Morristown, a few miles distant, and, without attempting to hold meetings, distributed some copies of a pamphlet, appending thereto a satirical cartoon of his experience in Boonton. A number of his persecutors from that place were instantly on his heels, with the result that the grand jury, under the colonial "blue laws," found two indictments against him; one for "blasphemy" in Boonton, the other for "blasphemy" in Morristown. "Blasphemy"! Only thirty miles from the metropolis of America, only thirteen years from the twentieth century, on the very ground where Whitman had sung the songs of democracy, a citizen of the Republic was to be tried for "blasphemy"! But the indictment had been found. The law was there. A coiled serpent, it had lain in lethargy for hundreds of years, beneath both the old and the new constitutions of New Jersey; and, should a single conviction result, it could uncoil and show its forked tongue and cruel fangs to the brave and heroic apostle of mental liberty. It could raise its horrid head and hiss in the ear of Charles B. Reynolds: "Two hundred dollars, and imprisonment at hard labor for twelve months."

Ingersoll moved gallantly to the defense. And what a defense it was!—not merely to win a

verdict, not merely for Charles B. Reynolds, not for any citizen of New Jersey, nor yet for any citizen of the United States, but for all mankind. The personal interests of the defendant, the intense public feeling, the legal aspects of the case,—its uniqueness—the only one of its kind ever tried in New Jersey, and the only one that had been tried in the United States in over fifty years—all these must be shut out of mind, if we would justly appreciate Ingersoll's effort. It transcends and outreaches the merely local, the provincial, the ephemeral. If one of the gods of Olympus were on trial, it would make a fitting defense. It is for all place and all time—a symphony of justice for the star-lit cathedral of the universe. Let us listen, in passing, to some of its enrapturing harmonies :—

"The most important thing in this world is liberty. More important than food or clothes—more important than gold or houses or lands—more important than art or science—more important that all religions, is the liberty of man. * * * Gladly would I give up the splendors of the nineteenth century—gladly would I forget every invention that has leaped from the brain of man—gladly would I see all books ashes, all works of art destroyed, all statues broken, and all the triumphs of the world lost—gladly, joyously would I go back to the abodes and dens of savagery, if that were necessary to preserve the inestimable gem of human liberty." (xi 59)

And after demonstrating that what is theologically called blasphemy is not the same in all lands at the same time; that what is blasphemy here is worship there; that what is blasphemy here now

may be worship here to-morrow, and vice versa; that no man can blaspheme a book or the Infinite; that, in short, theological blasphemy is an utter impossibility,—an unreal crime,—he inquires:—

"What is real blasphemy?"

And he replies:—

"To live on the unpaid labor of other men—that is blasphemy.

"To enslave your fellow-man, to put chains upon his body—that is blasphemy.

"To enslave the minds of men, to put manacles upon the brain, padlocks upon the lips—that is blasphemy.

"To deny what you believe to be true, to admit to be true what you believe to be a lie—that is blasphemy.

"To strike the weak and unprotected, in order that you may gain the applause of the ignorant and superstitious mob—that is blasphemy.

"To persecute the intelligent few, at the command of the ignorant many—that is blasphemy.

"To forge chains, to build dungeons, for your honest fellow-men—that is blasphemy.

"To pollute the souls of children with the dogma of eternal pain—that is blasphemy.

"To violate your conscience—that is blasphemy." (xi 104)

It would take us too far across the boundaries of biography to quote any of the beautiful and touching definitions of "worship" naturally following here; and there is no time to take even a hurried glance into the wondrous volume which he described—the book of all that is good and useful, tender and true,—"the bible of the world,"—which no one can blaspheme. Nor can we do aught else than to leave to imagination the profound thoughts,

the penetrating and luminous logic, the pathos, the lightnings of wit and the sun-glints of humor, that lie between Ingersoll's characteristic "Gentlemen of the Jury" and his final ardent hope that it will never again be necessary to stand in the temple of justice "and plead for the Liberty of Speech."

At the conclusion of Ingersoll's address, the court adjourned for luncheon. During the adjournment, many of the people who had been listening to the speaker crowded around him and expressed agreement with what he had said. Among them was the son of a minister of the place. When the court reconvened, Ingersoll joined in a conference of the three judges as to the case; and, in commenting on the matter, while the jury were deliberating, he told the judges what the people had said; and he added: "You better discharge Reynolds, or I will appeal and try the case again and convert the whole town."

It redounds none the less to Ingersoll's credit that the jury, sitting honor-bound in the shadow of a law which they could not evade, rendered a verdict of guilt. And still less does his credit suffer from the fact that the court, having listened with rapt attention, imposed, under the same circumstances, a minimum fine only.

Fearful of affixing an anticlimax to Ingersoll's splendid action, I hesitate to add here, and do add only for the sake of narrative completeness, that

the fine, twenty-five dollars, with costs, amounting in all to seventy-five dollars, was paid by him; that his services were gratuitous; and that while in Morristown, in connection with the case, he refused an offer of a thousand dollars if he would go elsewhere, for a few hours, to another court.

§ 4.

Many admirers of Ingersoll's intellect and art must often have wished, that, in order to assign to his genius the place which they are so confident it merits, a comparison of at least one of his productions with those of his distinguished contemporaries, on the same theme, might be made. The author confesses that he has experienced this wish, and that the task involved might have been included in the present work had he not discovered that such task had already been performed. Although unconsciously, the comparison desired was admirably effected by Mr. Edward W. Bok, who, after the death of Beecher, in 1887, requested the latter's friends to contribute to a volume in his memory. Among the many distinguished persons to respond (in addition to Ingersoll), were Cleveland, E. P. Roe, George William Curtis, Talmage, Whittier, Holmes, the Duke of Argyll, and Gladstone.

It would here be obviously impracticable to institute even the briefest comparison of the styles and the methods of these writers in treating their

common theme; and it would be as obviously unjust to present examples of the style and the method of any particular one of them. It is fair to state, however, that no one who has not read the memorial to Beecher can justly appreciate the absolute uniqueness and the comparative loftiness, both artistic and intellectual, with which Ingersoll approached the subject before him. In his entire tribute,—the longest in the volume,—not an act nor an incident, and only one date, in the life of the preacher,—the year of his birth,—is specifically mentioned; and yet that tribute presents to the gaze of a sorrowing world a clear, comprehensive, ample view of Henry Ward Beecher. It reveals the psychological evolution of the famous divine, from his cradle "in a Puritan penitentiary," until he became "the greatest orator that stood within the pulpit's narrow curve." It does far more: it is an analysis, a synthesis, a characterization, a eulogy. It is the most generous, the most beautiful, the most fitting wreath that has ever been placed by intellectual hospitality on the tomb of a fallen hero of a rejected faith. Like the other tributes, it will of course be read in memory of Beecher; unlike the others, it will be reread in memory of itself. But, read once in conjunction with them, it will not have received the inevitable rereading before it places the reader beyond the reach of wonderment at the statement elsewhere made by Mr. Gladstone: "Colonel Ingersoll writes with a rare and enviable brilliancy."

§ 5.

Through the efforts of Mr. Allen Thorndike Rice, who was the editor of the *North American Review*, and who enjoyed a wide acquaintance with the leading men of his day, Ingersoll became, during this year, the champion of Rationalism in the most memorable religious controversy of his century. It was the most memorable, not only because of the eminence of those taking part, but because of scope and profundity of argument. Indeed, it would be difficult to name another trio who, by reason of intellectual attainments and world-wide recognition, could have brought into a discussion of the comparative merits of Christianity and Rationalism greater dignity and authority than the men who, seemingly unmindful of the fate of predecessors, matched abilities with Ingersoll in 1887 and 1888.

This memorable intellectual tourney, which may be properly termed the Field-Gladstone-Manning-Ingersoll Controversy, began in the *North American Review* for August, 1887, with *An Open Letter to Robert G. Ingersoll*, from Rev. Henry M. Field, D.D., and closed with the second part of Ingersoll's reply to Cardinal Manning, in the same magazine, for November, 1888. Field contributed two papers; Gladstone, one paper; Manning, one paper; Ingersoll, five papers. First attacked by one of the Christian trio, Ingersoll had not only

the last word with every antagonist, individually, but the last word in the controversy.

As a later chapter will present Ingersoll's views of the "fundamental truths of Christianity," it would be not only impracticable, but a work of supererogation, to indicate here the attitude that he assumed toward those "truths," in the lengthy discussion just mentioned. As to the obvious outcome of the latter, there is, similarly, as little need as there is space for dilation. It can be stated, however, alike with fitting brevity and truth, that it is the sincere wish of every one who is a believer in the soundness of Rationalism, in general, and in Ingersoll's controversial supremacy, in particular, and who is familiar with this truly great controversy, that all may read, with impartiality and candor, its two sides. That such is the dearest wish of the most solicitous friends of Ingersoll, if not of those of Field, Gladstone, and Manning, is evident in the fact that both sides of the controversy were long since published, in full, in the authorized edition of Ingersoll's works.[1]

[1] Walt Whitman said, "on reading Gladstone's reply to Ingersoll: 'It won't do, Mr. Gladstone; you may try: you have the right to try—you try hard: but the Colonel carries too many guns for you on that line!'" And again: "'Gladstone is no match for Ingersoll—at least not in such a controversy. Of course, he is a great man, or was—has had a past—but in questions of the theological sort, in questions of Homeric scholarship, he is by no means much. Oh! there will be a funny time of it!' Here he put his two hands together scoop-wise. 'Bob will take him up this fashion, turn him over (all sides of him), look at him sweetly, ever so sweetly, smile, then crunch him!'—to

§ 6.

When, on the death of Roscoe Conkling, in 1888, the people of the Empire State resolved to pay a fitting tribute to one of her favorite sons, Ingersoll was unanimously invited, by a joint legislative

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illustrate which he worked his two hands together as if to crush their imagined burden—'Yes, crunch him, much as a cat would a mouse, till there's no life left to fool with.'"—*With Walt Whitman in Camden.* By Horace Traubel. Pp. 69 and 81.

In the same connection, Professor Huxley wrote as follows:—

"4 MARLBOROUGH PLACE, ABBEY ROAD, N. W.,
"LONDON, March, 1889 [?].

"DEAR COLONEL INGERSOLL:

"Some unknown benefactor has sent me a series of numbers of the *North American Review* containing your battles with various 'Bulls of Bashan' in 1888—and the very kindly and appreciative article of last April about my picador work over here ['Professor Huxley and Agnosticism,' April, 1889].

"I write mainly to thank you for it and to say that I feel the force of your admonition to Harrison and myself—to leave off quarreling with one another and to join forces against the common enemy. The excuse of 'Please, sir, it was the other boy began,' is somewhat ignoble; but really if you will look at Harrison's article again, I think you will see there was no help for it.

"However, he is far too good a man to quarrel with for long, and I have hope we shall arrive at a treaty of peace and even coöperation before long. In the meanwhile, I am glad to say that we are, personally, excellent friends.

"You are to be congratulated on your opponents. The rabbi is the only one with any stuff in him—though, by the way, I have not read Manning, and do not mean to. I have had many opportunities of taking his measure—and he is a parlous windbag—and nothing else, absolutely. Gladstone's attack on you is one of the best things he has written. I do not think there is more than 50 per cent more verbiage than necessary, nor any sentence with *more* than two meanings. If he goes on improving at this rate he will be an English classic by the time he is ninety. I see that some Washington paper

committee, to exercise again those powers which have contributed so much to his reputation as the greatest of orators. Himself an intimate friend and ardent admirer of the dead statesman, Ingersoll gave hearty acceptance. His tribute was delivered at Albany, on the evening of May 9th, the occasion being a joint session of the legislature. The building in which the session was held was taxed to its utmost capacity of some 3,500, more than 2,000 being turned away.

Those who read the tribute to Conkling with the expectation of finding a catalogue of his achievements, or a copy of his life's itinerary, will meet with the same disappointment as those who read with like expectation the tribute to Beecher. But those who read either with the presupposition that specific treatment of act and incident affords the

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(I forget the name) has been charging me with 'British insolence' to the people of the United States for my remarks about Mormonism. Of all people in the world, I should say I am the last to be fairly accused of want of respect for America or Americans, and, beyond a little mild raillery, I cannot discover where I have sinned.

"But I expect it is only Christian zeal under the mask of patriotism.

"I have now finished work for the present and am off to Switzerland, to get my rickety fabric tightened up for the next three or four months. I am good for no sustained work, but every now and then a spurt is possible.

"Do not answer this letter, I beg, unless the spirit should move you. My life has been made a burden to me by letter writing, and now I do as little as possible. But if the spirit *should* move you, then Monte Generoso, Mendrisio, will be my address for the next month; and after that, Maloja, Haute Engadine, up to September. I am yours very faithfully, T. H. HUXLEY."

(From *The Truth Seeker*, May 7, 1910. The bracketed matter is mine.)

truer and nobler portrait will certainly gain in knowledge. Ingersoll was not a geologist nor an anatomist—he was an artist. As in the landscape of a master you behold the simple and solitary grandeur of the familiar mountain, so in a eulogy by Ingersoll you behold, unburdened with petty detail, the majestic form of a Beecher or a Conkling.

Endeavoring to realize in few words something of his grace and adequacy in the present instance, it is impossible to omit his introduction. We listen as to a Wagnerian prelude :—

"Roscoe Conkling—a great man, an orator, a statesman, a lawyer, a distinguished citizen of the Republic, in the zenith of his fame and power has reached his journey's end; and we are met, here in the city of his birth, to pay our tribute to his worth and work. He earned and held a proud position in the public thought. He stood for independence, for courage, and above all for absolute integrity, and his name was known and honored by many millions of his fellow-men." (xii 427)

Add to this a few of those epigrammatic characterizations of which Ingersoll was the consummate master, and we have a perfect likeness of Conkling. What, for example, could more fittingly describe the latter's steadfast moral courage than the following exquisite rhythmical simile?—

"Nothing is grander than when a strong, intrepid man breaks chains, levels walls and breasts the many-headed mob like some great cliff that meets and mocks the innumerable billows of the sea." (xii 430)

But who shall say that the reward which the

following sentence prophesies for such as Conkling will not fall, in full measure, to Ingersoll himself?—

"When real history shall be written by the truthful and the wise, these men, these kneelers at the shrines of chance and fraud, these brazen idols worshiped once as gods, will be the very food of scorn, while those who bore the burden of defeat, who earned and kept their self-respect, who would not bow to man or men for place or power, will wear upon their brows the laurel mingled with the oak." (xii 430)

As an example of the fine, nobly eulogistic tone that pervades the entire tribute, nothing could be better than the following, on the imperious rectitude of the dead statesman:—

"Above his marvelous intellectual gifts—above all place he ever reached,—above the ermine he refused,—rises his integrity like some great mountain peak—and there it stands, firm as the earth beneath, pure as the stars above." (xii 435)

If, as I trust, the reader shall have derived from the preceding an adequate impression of the oratorical quality of the tribute, as thus far considered, then, and then only, will he be able justly to appreciate the majestic beauty and grandeur of its peroration:—

"He was of the classic mould—a figure from the antique world. He had the pose of the great statues—the pride and bearing of the intellectual Greek, of the conquering Roman, and he stood in the wide free air as though within his veins there flowed the blood of a hundred kings.

"And as he lived he died. Proudly he entered the darkness—or the dawn—that we call death. Unshrinkingly he passed beyond our

horizon, beyond the twilight's purple hills, beyond the utmost reach of human harm or help—to that vast realm of silence or of joy where the innumerable dwell, and he has left with us his wealth of thought and deed—the memory of a brave, imperious, honest man, who bowed alone to death." (xii 437)

With this conclusion, ex-Speaker General Husted and Senator Coggeshall, respectively, moved and seconded that the legislature tender to Ingersoll a vote of thanks for an oration which, "in purity of style, in poetic expression, in cogency of statement, and in brilliancy of rhetoric, * * * stands unrivaled among the eulogies of either ancient or modern days. As effective as Demosthenes, as polished as Cicero, as ornate as Burke, as scholarly as Gladstone, the orator of the evening, in surpassing others, has eclipsed himself." The vote was given with the same rare sense which had prompted the invitation to deliver the tribute.

As an oratorical feat the latter reflects even higher credit on its author when we consider that, at the time of its production, the Field-Gladstone-Manning-Ingersoll Controversy was in progress; that, on the night previous to the delivery of the tribute, Ingersoll was engaged in a public oral discussion of *The Limitations of Toleration*, with Hon. Frederic R. Coudert and ex-Governor Stewart L. Woodford, before the Nineteenth Century Club;[1]

[1] After reading the New York *Herald's* account of the discussion with Woodford and Coudert, Whitman said: "I am done with it: you will like to see it [Traubel]. Ingersoll uses them both up as a matter of course—does it easily, nonchalantly—sits back in his chair—I

and that he was doubtless contemplating the *Decoration Day Oration* which he was shortly to deliver in New York, and which, by the way, proved to be second only, in power and beauty, to his own oration of 1882.

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should imagine, this way—shuts his eyes : as easily as this, sweeps them right and left with the movement of his arm."—*With Walt Whitman in Camden*, by Horace Traubel, p. 129.

CHAPTER VII.

FROM EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-NINE TO EIGHTEEN NINETY-TWO

IN 1889, the Rationalists of Europe and America having conjointly provided for the erection of a life-size statue of Bruno, in the Campo dei Fiori at Rome, on the spot where he was burned at the stake, February 17, 1600, by order of the papal Inquisition, Ingersoll was invited by the international committee to deliver the oration unveiling the memorial mentioned.

We can imagine with what wealth of feeling,—what triumphant inspiration,—the orator of universal liberty would have risen in the shadow of the Vatican to pay to the memory of him whom he had already styled "the first real martyr" that debt of gratitude and historic justice which had so long been overdue; and we can imagine also, but with regret, how much the world of art and letters was the loser because of his inability to accept an invitation which, coming from a source so truly representative of emancipated thought, was to him especially pleasing.

Of the sublime heights which he would have at-

tained had he accepted, we catch a glimpse from the critical viewpoint of the eminent English Rationalist George Jacob Holyoake, who, in commenting on the great orator's loftiness and originality, said :—

" When his subject was Bruno, upon whom many pens had exhausted all the terms they knew, Ingersoll's first words were: 'The night of the Middle Ages lasted for a thousand years. The first star that enriched the horizon of this universal gloom was Giordano Bruno. He was the herald of the dawn.' "

But although the orator of the better age which Bruno so clearly foresaw, and for which he so nobly gave his life, was unable to pay in Rome the tribute of his gratitude, he rendered substantial aid at home, not only as the head of the committee representing the United States on the international committee, but as indicated in the following characteristic letter opening the American subscription :—

" LAW OFFICE, ROBERT G. INGERSOLL,
" 40 WALL STREET,
" NEW YORK, FEB. 8, 1889.

" *T. B. Wakeman, Esq.,*
Treasurer of the Bruno Monument Committee.

" MY DEAR SIR: It gives me great pleasure to inclose my check for one hundred dollars ($100).

" I shall never be quite satisfied until there is a monument to Bruno higher than the dome of St. Peter's.

" Yours very truly,
" R. G. INGERSOLL."

§ 2.

In 1891 he first delivered his lecture on Shakespeare. The several mental steps leading to this marvelous contribution to Shakespearean criticism are of keen interest. They are also of first importance, because they afford an intimate, if only a partial, view of the artistic and intellectual evolution of a great personality.

The circumstances of Ingersoll's introduction to Shakespeare's "book and volume of the brain," and the impression which the latter made on the prose-poet whom the future will rank as second only to its author, were as unusual as those of Ingersoll's introduction to the poetry of Burns. It should here be recalled, that, in the late forties or very early fifties, the works of Burns and Shakespeare were not to be found in every American home,—certainly not in the home of every orthodox clergyman in the Prairie State. The works of real genius were considered hardly "safe for the young." "It was admitted, on all hands," says Ingersoll himself, in reference to the literary standards and ideals which prevailed as late even as 1855, "that Burns was a child of nature of whom his mother was ashamed and proud." "A few, not quite orthodox, delighted in the mechanical monotony of Pope, and the really wicked—those lost to all religious shame—were worshipers of Shakespeare." (iii 251) Reading "between the lines," the story

of Ingersoll's growing impatience with Pope, whom he once termed a "word-carpenter," and, reading the lines themselves, the story of Ingersoll's becoming one of the "worshipers" just mentioned, are best told in the following paragraph:—

"* * * one night I stopped at a little hotel in Illinois, many years ago, when we were not quite civilized, when the footsteps of the red man were still in the prairies. While I was waiting for supper an old man was reading from a book, and among others who were listening was myself. I was filled with wonder. I had never heard anything like it. I was ashamed to ask him what he was reading; I supposed that an intelligent boy ought to know. So I waited, and when the little bell rang for supper I hung back and they went out. I picked up the book; it was Sam Johnson's edition of Shakespeare. The next day I bought a copy for four dollars. My God! more than the national debt. You talk about the present straits of the Treasury [1895]! For days, for nights, for months, for years, I read those books, two volumes, and I commenced with the introduction. I haven't read that introduction for nearly fifty years, certainly forty-five, but I remember it still. Other writers are like a garden diligently planted and watered, but Shakespeare a forest where the oaks and elms toss their branches to the storm, where the pine towers, where the vine bursts into blossom at its foot. That book opened to me a new world, another nature. While Burns was the valley, here was a range of mountains with thousands of such valleys; while Burns was as sweet a star as ever rose into the horizon, here was a heaven filled with constellations. That book has been a source of perpetual joy to me from that day to this; and whenever I read Shakespeare—if it ever happens that I fail to find some new beauty, some new presentation of some wonderful truth, or another word that bursts into blossom, I shall make up my mind that my mental faculties are failing, that it is not the fault of the book." (xii 172)

A gentleman who enjoyed the intimate acquaintance of many of Ingersoll's foremost contemporaries once told the author, among other things

concerning Ingersoll: "He could quote more 'Shakespeare' than any other person whom I have ever known." Actors like Edwin Booth, Laurence Barrett, and Joseph Jefferson went far beyond this, they having repeatedly remarked, for instance, that Ingersoll would have made 'a wonderful *Hamlet* or *Lear*.' And it was because of the truths expressed in such comments—it was because the "myriad-minded" had penetrated to, and wakened a response in, the innermost depths of Ingersoll's heart and soul—that, for many years, the latter felt an almost unconquerable reluctance to attempt to do justice, in a single lecture, to a theme sympathetically so exacting, and intellectually so magnificent. Just how much of its debt of gratitude for *Shakespeare* the great republic of English letters owes to the little republic which consisted of wife, daughters, and other relatives and friends, and of which Ingersoll was the central figure, for the latter's final success in overcoming, in a measure, this reluctance, we cannot say. But it is known to have been at least in accord with their suggestion,—the suggestion of his immediate family, in particular, —that he made written notes of his casual thoughts, observations, and impressions of the subject concerned, with a view of elaborating them as a lecture. And when, after many years of contemplation, the possessor of the most eloquent and felicitous tongue that has expressed thoughts in English since April 23, 1616, stepped upon the platform,

the same reluctance, if less intense, still rose in his consciousness of the unattainable grandeur of his subject; and he was impelled to say:—

"Shakespeare is too great a theme. I feel as though endeavoring to grasp a globe so large that the hand obtains no hold. He who would worthily speak of the great dramatist should be inspired by 'a muse of fire that should ascend the brightest heaven of invention'—he should have 'a kingdom for a stage, and monarchs to behold the swelling scene.'" (iii 4)

Concerning the production of which this extract is a part, and from which I shall quote in a later chapter, it can only be added here that Ingersoll scornfully rejected the Baconian theory and placed Shakespeare at the artistic and intellectual summit of the human race.

§ 3.

During this year, the Davis will case, in which Ingersoll had been retained as counsel for the contestants, and which came to a final trial at Butte, Mont., in September, received a considerable share of his attention. This fact, however, despite the financial importance of the case, and its intense interest, would have no special claim to attention here did it not afford further evidence of his versatility and his oratorical genius.

The opposing counsel, Senator Sanders, begged the jury, in effect, to beware of Ingersoll, whose oratory fittingly transcended that of Greece in the time of Alexander, and who was famed for his elo-

quence over two continents and in the islands of the sea. "The matchless eloquence of Ingersoll!" was the graphic exclamation of one of the members of the press who had heard the former's address to the jury; and he continued: "Where will one look for the like of it? What other man living has the faculty of blending wit and humor, pathos and fact and logic with such exquisite grace, or with such impressive force? * * * To a modern audience, at least, Demosthenes on the Crown would seem a pretty poor sort of affair by the side of Ingersoll on the Davis will."

But the address is even more remarkable, it seems to me, as evidence of Ingersoll's versatility. Indeed, those who read it will be slow in believing that its author was the same Ingersoll who has thus far appeared in these pages. Its frigid deductions; its astute, sleuth-like discovery and analysis of motive, and corresponding synthesis of conduct; its confutations and confoundings of chemical and chirographical experts; its majestic rise on the ladder of logic, from the foundation of fact to the dome of conclusion, using cause and effect for rounds—these will hang heavy on our credulity if we are to believe that they are of the same soul that pictured on a sightless canvas the grandeur and glory, the heroism, the cruelty, the despairing love, and the pathos of war—the same soul that burst into song at the birthplace of Burns,

and arched with a radiance that can never fail nor fade the grave of a little child.

In this case, which involved the disposition of many millions of dollars, it was sought by the counsel for the proponent, John A. Davis, to show, among other things, that a certain will was genuine; that it was written by Job Davis, who was known and acknowledged to have been a good penman, a correct speller, an excellent scholar. Ingersoll, counsel for the contestants, believed and sought to show, on the other hand, that the will in question was not genuine, was not written by Job Davis, but was forged by James R. Eddy, who was known and acknowledged to be a poor penman, an incorrect speller, an ignorant man.

Referring to the proponent's testimony that the will was written by Job Davis, Ingersoll said:—

"There is this beautiful peculiarity in nature—a lie never fits a fact, never. You only fit a lie with another lie, made for the express purpose, because you can change a lie but you can't change a fact, and after a while the time comes when the last lie you tell has to be fitted to a fact, and right there is a bad joint; consequently you must test the statements of people who say they saw, not by what they say but by other facts, by the surroundings, by what are called probabilities; by the naturalness of the statement." (x 537)

As we read the following, we are apt to forget that we are listening to one of the profoundest of logicians, and to fancy ourselves back at one of the old-time "spelling-bees":—

"Now, the next question is, was Job Davis a good speller? Let

us be honest about it. How delighted they would have been to show that he was an ignorant booby. But their witnesses and our witnesses both swear that he was the best speller in the neighborhood; and when they brought men from other communities to a spelling match, after all had fallen on the field, after the floor was covered with dead and wounded, Job Davis stood proudly up, not having missed a word." (x 538)

After making many other telling references to the fact that the will contained every evidence of ignorant authorship, he continued :—

"There are twenty words misspelled in this short will, and the most common words, some of them, in the English language. Now, I say that these twenty misspelled words are twenty witnesses—twenty witnesses that tell the truth without being on their oath, and that you cannot mix by cross-examination. Twenty witnesses! Every misspelled word holds up its maimed and mutilated hand and swears that Job Davis did not write that will—every one. Suppose witnesses had sworn that Judge Woolworth wrote this will. How many Salt Creekers do you think it would take to convince you that he was around spelling sheet 'sheat'?" (x 541)

Here Judge Woolworth, seeking to mitigate the orthographic crime, interrupted with :—

"I have done worse than that a great many times."

Whereupon Ingersoll, as quick as light, retorted :—

"You have acted worse than that, but you have never spelled worse than that."

No further witty interruptions of his address were attempted.

Among the numerous misspellings and chirographic mistakes, mistakes in punctuation, peculi-

arities and oddities, which tended to show that the will was not written by Job Davis, but by James R. Eddy, Ingersoll found the word "give" spelled "guive," and he said:—

"We have shown that Eddy was the poorest speller in the business. Whenever they went to a spelling-match, at the first fire he dropped; never outlived, I think, the first volley. And one man by the name of Sharp distinctly recollects that they gave out a sentence to be spelled: 'Give alms to the poor,' and Eddy had to spell the first word, give; and he lugged in his 'u' with both ears—'guive,' and he dropped dead the first fire. The man remembers it because it is such a curious spelling of give; and if I had heard anybody spell it with a 'u' when I was six years old it would linger in my memory still." (x 546)

There is in the address another excellent example of Ingersoll's acuteness, and of his method of reasoning from cause to effect. Endeavoring to show that a Mr. Sconce signed the will after some pinholes had been made in it, Ingersoll said:—

"There is a thing about this will which, to my mind, is a demonstration. * * * I find, and so do you find it in the second initial of Sconce, in the letter 'C.' There are two punctures, and you will find that exactly where the punctures are there is a little spatter in the ink—a disturbance of the line, in the capital first; in the small 'c' there is another puncture and another disturbance of the line. Professor Elwell says that these holes were made afterwards. Let's see. There is a hole, and there is a splatter and a change of the line. There is another hole and there is another change. There is another hole and there is another change. What is natural? What is reasonable? What is probable? It is that the hole, being there, interrupted the pen, and accounts for the diversion of the line, and for the spatter. That is natural, isn't it? but they take the unnatural side. They say that these holes were made after the writing. Would it not be a miracle that just three holes should happen to

strike just the three places where there had been a division of the line and a little spatter of the ink? Take up your table of logarithms and figure away until you are blind, and such an accident could not happen in as many thousand, billion, trillion, quintillion years as you can express by figures." (x 550)

And again the same qualities, tinctured with wit:—

"Professor Elwell accounts for all the dirt on this will by perspiration, all on one side and made by the thumb, and although there were four fingers under it at the same time, the fingers were so contrary they wouldn't perspire. This left the thumb to do all the sweating. I need not call him a professor of perspiration, for that throws no light on the subject * * *." (x 551)

The last sentence is typical of Ingersoll in forensic procedure. He excluded all "that throws no light on the subject." He could afford to do this. Ingersoll the lawyer believed that it was a lawyer's duty, whether prosecuting or defending, not to abuse another lawyer, but to enlighten both the court and the jury upon the testimony, just as Ingersoll the rationalistic reformer believed that it was his duty to enlighten the great jury of the public upon the testimony presented by theology and science. In this very case, he had said:—

"Now, let us be honest about this matter—let us be fair. It is not a personal quarrel between lawyers. I never quarrel with anybody; my philosophy being that everybody does as he must, and if he is in bad luck and does wrong, why, let us pity him, and if we happen to have good luck, and take the path where roses bloom, why, let us be joyful. That is my doctrine; no need of fighting about these little things. They are all over in a little while anyway." (x 539)

And they were, even with the great soul who had thus spoken; for this was on September 5, 1891.

Although the jury failed to agree, thus compromising the case, Ingersoll left the scene of forensic battle with the verdict of the people in his favor, and without compromising with his conscience; and this was worth more to him than complete victory in the Davis will case, with the Davis millions added.

He was in Helena during the early part of the preceding February, when a committee of the state legislature waited upon and informed him that Hon. Aaron C. Witter, the recently elected speaker of the House, and a representative from Beaverhead County, had died, leaving penniless two little girls, who would have been in good circumstances but for their parents' charity to others. The committee requested Ingersoll to lecture for the benefit of the two orphans. He responded with that heartiness which had already passed into tradition.[1] The repetition of *Shakespeare* netted $1,165, Ingersoll purchasing a number of tickets for his own lecture.

The Helena Daily Herald of February 7, 1891, contained this editorial comment: "'The greatest

[1] On February 5th, Ingersoll wrote to his own daughters: "* * * I am going to deliver a lecture here to-morrow night. Mr. Witter, speaker of the House here, died the other day. His wife died the day before he did; both were buried on the same day. They left two girls, aged 7 and 9—and left them without a cent. The lecture is for their benefit. I am going to talk about Shakespeare. There is great excitement, and the house is going to be packed. * * *"

of the human race,' says Colonel Ingersoll of the immortal Shakespeare. 'A greater than Shakespeare is his panegyrist,' says a citizen who heard the Ingersoll lecture last night."

§ 4.

During an interview which was published in *The Sunday Union*, of New Haven, Conn., on April 10, 1881, Ingersoll was asked this question:—

"Is it a fact that there are thousands of clergymen in the country whom you would fear to meet in fair debate?"

He replied, among other things:—

"No; the fact is I would like to meet them all in one."

A Christmas Sermon by Ingersoll, attacking, in writing, the Christian doctrine of eternal punishment, and indorsing the human, natural, joyful side of Christmas, which he declared was borrowed from the pagan world, was published in the New York *Evening Telegram* of December 19, 1891. This *Sermon* of less than five hundred words, seemed to have fully as great effect upon the opposite rank and file of the church militant as *The Crisis*, by Thomas Paine, had had upon the latter's own side among the disheartened patriots of Washington's army. While *The Crisis* was read, under the orders of Washington, at many a patriot campfire, there is no record of its having been so read

at the camp-fires of the enemy. Not so with *A Christmas Sermon.* This was attacked with great violence by the New York *Christian Advocate*, the editor of which called upon the public to boycott the *Evening Telegram.* In doing this, it was necessary for the *Advocate* to republish at least the substance of the *Sermon* which, consequently, was read beside thousands of Christian hearth-fires that it never would have reached through the medium of the *Telegram.* The latter, stung by such effrontery,—by such a travesty of the freedom of the press,—promptly dared the *Advocate* to do its worst, and published, at the same time, an answer from Ingersoll—an answer which, again like Paine's *Crisis*, " echoed throughout America."

" The excitement produced by the resulting battle between the brilliant orator and the distinguished champions of Christianity who undertook to silence him has not been equalled in the history of modern religious controversy. Thousands of newspapers, hundred of pulpits, and scores of societies have taken up the challenge to Christianity thrown down by Colonel Ingersoll." Thus wrote one who had followed the controversy from day to day.[1] The clashing of theological arms continued until after the middle of February, venturesome knights of all the principal Christian creeds, and even Buddhists, entering the arena.

[1] See *The Great Ingersoll Controversy*, Peter Eckler, Publisher, New York, 1894, preface.

Before the close of this conflict, five papers were called forth from the Great Agnostic, some of them, though lengthy, being remarkable for cogency and conciseness, as he was obliged to conjoin in a single paper his replies to many participants. At last, Ingersoll was indebted to the clergy. They had helped him to realize his ideal of a debate as expressed ten years before. He had met them "all in one"; and he was content to have public intelligence determine the result.

§ 5.

Although Ingersoll was far from inactive, in either a literary or an oratorical way, during the remainder of 1892, and although he expressed many profound, lofty, and beautiful thoughts, a single production of the period mentioned, and that an oratorical production, arrests our attention here. It does so, not because it chances to be withal the supreme creation of the year, nor yet because it contains passages that are, perhaps, equal to those of his finer utterances of any other year, but because the nature of its subject-matter demands for it a place in an adequate biographical sketch.

And here let me bring into the already crowded vista of these pages another colossus in whom, it seems to me, every truly appreciative Ingersollian, at least, should find much to admire and love. For Walt Whitman, unfathomable and unclassifiable mystic though he was, possessed in generous

measure many of the qualities that have rendered the name of Ingersoll an inspiration and a precious momory to millions of his fellows. Certainly none of the wide dissimilarities often existing between the great could account for the inseverable bond that united the hearts of the "Great Agnostic" and the "Good Grey Poet." Nor could their mutual affection scarcely be explained on the ground of intellectual or logical similitude. The truth is, that each admired and loved the other, not so much for his genius, however highly that was prized, but primarily—chiefly—for his manhood. Their affinity, although undoubtedly both artistic and intellectual, was yet far more ethical in character—humanitarian, in the widest, noblest sense.

To Whitman, Ingersoll was not only the ideal orator, but (to quote Whitman's own words) "a man whose importance to the time could not be overfigured: not literal importance, not argumentative importance, not anti-theological-Republican-party importance: but spiritual importance—importance as a force, as consuming energy—a fiery blast for the new virtues, which are only the old virtues done over for honest use again." [1] And in reference to the several great men who had manifested their loyalty to him in his unique position as a poet, Whitman spoke of Ingersoll as one of his best victories, since he was "one of the most magnetically

[1] *With Walt Whitman in Camden.* By Horace Traubel. P. 69.

spontaneous men on the planet." [1] "He is far, far deeper than he is supposed to be, even by radicals," remarked the poet, elsewhere; and he continued: "We get lots of deep-sea fruit out of him." [2] And again: "America don't know to-day how proud she ought to be of Ingersoll." [3]

To the latter, likewise, Whitman was not merely an iconoclast in art and intellect, but a real radical, —a genuine man,—the embodiment of a great ethical force. He was not simply a great poet: he was the poet of individuality, of liberty, of democracy —the mastersinger of the Great Republic. His astronomic scope; his dynamic power and limitless passion; his boundless charity, sympathy, and brotherly love; his emotion-born rhythms, never measured, but charged with mighty harmonies that lave the human soul as do the murmurous and inconstant billows the lone rocks of some desolate shore; his majestic poise and bearing; his scorn for the "literary Lilliputians"; and even his iconoclastic forms and methods in poetic art, Ingersoll lovingly praised and ardently championed.

But, unreservedly loyal as was the latter in all this, he was even more steadfast in the far less intellectually exacting office of "counselor and friend." During those many years when Whitman and death "were near neighbors," Ingersoll,

[1] *The Complete Writings of Walt Whitman*, Camden Edition, vol. i., Introduction, p. lxxxix.

[2] *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, p. 114.

[3] Ibid., p. 37.

still buoyant with health and life, was to the venerable poet as an attentive and affectionate son. If in any hour of need the orator could not be near to sustain and reassure with his magnetic presence the aged poet, some inimitable word of love and cheer would come in stead. When, for example, on May 31, 1889, Camden paid its "compliment" to him who was known and loved of all,—however high, however low,—Ingersoll telegraphed from New York: "Am confined to my house by illness, and regret that I can't be with you to-day. Give my more than regards to Walt Whitman, who has won such a splendid victory over the 'granitic pudding-heads' of the world. He is a genuine continental American."[1] Not only the poet himself, but his friends, fared far better on the corresponding date of the next year,—his seventy-first birthday; for "Ingersoll got over" and, at a dinner at Reisser's, in Philadelphia, "impromptued across the table to Whitman for fifty-five minutes in a speech which Whitman thought the most consummate piece of oratory he had ever enjoyed."[2]

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[1] *Camden's Compliment to Walt Whitman.* Edited by Horace L. Traubel. P. 71.

[2] *The Complete Writings of Walt Whitman,* Camden Edition, vol. i., Introduction, p. lxxxviii.

"Afterwards, sitting opposite Whitman, he [Ingersoll] held a long discussion with him on immortality, the orator finding no evidence for it, and the poet asserting it with a tenacious instinct. Reporters scribbled shorthand notes while the two celebrities debated."—*Walt Whitman: His Life and Work.* By Bliss Perry. P. 255.

But this oratorical standard of the "Good Grey Poet" was not long to endure; for, on October 21st, less than five months later, he was to hear the same orator with a far wider scope, and under more inspiring conditions,—conditions which, moreover, would again make him, of all the eager listeners, the most deeply concerned.

For, although imbued with respect, and even the tenderest reverence, for the hope of recompense and recognition for all in another world, Ingersoll believed that the individual's qualities and achievements, and especially those of genius, should be recognized in this. "Let us put wreaths on the brows of the living," he would say. This he resolved to do in the case of Whitman. He would lecture in Philadelphia, and, incidentally applying the principle of mercenary benevolence, which he had found to be so admirably practical elsewhere, he would, with the inevitably generous proceeds, help to smoothe the remaining way for him who had wiped the death-damp from the unknown soldier's brow, and breathed a threnody worthy of the martyred Lincoln. But when the Great Agnostic applied, in the City of Brotherly Love, for the use of the most commodious (and therefore most suitable) place for the purpose, the Broad Street Academy-Hall, the theological prejudice of its management was matched with their pity for the poet who had long since reached the stage "where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs"; and Ing-

ersoll was scornfully refused.[1] The use of Horticultural Hall was permitted, however; and Ingersoll's "Testimonial to Walt Whitman" enabled the latter to realize nearly nine hundred dollars.[2]

But the insignificance of this or any other sum, in comparison with the rest that the testimonial enabled him to realize, was probably never known to any one else than Whitman. For, to be appreciated by even the unlettered would have been a pleasure; to be appreciated by the literary mediocrities would have been satisfaction; but to be analyzed, understood, accepted, interpreted, justified, and finally canonized, by genius itself, must have been paradise. And all this, in his lengthy address entitled *Liberty in Literature*, Ingersoll

[1] "Ingersoll never did anything but good-naturedly refer to this event. Several years later I mentioned to him a story current here, to the effect that Alfred Baker had had some superstition in connection with a terrific storm which arose during the evening of Ingersoll's last lecture in the Academy. In writing me, Ingersoll handled the matter humorously, as was his practice: 'I am not surprised at the reason Baker had for shutting me out of the Academy. Superstition has nothing to do with common sense. Even Seneca, the philosopher, talked of several kinds of thunder—among others the thunder of warning. So you see that Rome and Philadelphia are on a par.' And concluding the letter, he said: 'May you live long and prosper, and may you at last civilize the directors of the Academy of Music.'"—Horace L. Traubel, in the Philadelphia *North American*.

[2] "The poet had been wheeled on the stage in an invalid's chair, and at the conclusion of Ingersoll's fervid oratory the bard said a few words of thanks to the audience. Then he was wheeled back to a half-lighted hotel dining-room, where he sat late with Ingersoll, munching a little bread dipped in champagne and talking about Death. He had never been more picturesque."—*Walt Whitman: His Life and Work*. By Bliss Perry. P. 255.

surely did with consummate mastery. He touched the secret, not only of Whitman's poetry, but of all poetry. Indeed, those will do but meager justice to Ingersoll's aesthetic knowledge and critical power who fail to examine with care the laurel-wreath of eloquence which he so lovingly placed upon the brow of the aged author of *Leaves of Grass.*

"The evening of the last meeting between Ingersoll and Whitman," write the latter's biographers, "was a sad one. * * * While Ingersoll was outwardly cheerful he realized that Whitman's stream of life ran low. But the two big men had their talk out and parted like lovers who were resigned to events."[1]

"After the supper and talk—after the day is done,
* * * * * *
Good-bye and good-bye with emotional lips repeating,
* * * * * * *
Shunning, postponing severance—seeking to ward off the last word ever so little,
E'en at the exit-door turning—charges superfluous calling back—e'en as he descends the steps,
Something to eke out a minute additional—shadows of nightfall deepening,
* * * * * * dimmer the forthgoer's visage and form,
Soon to be lost for aye in the darkness—loth, O so loth to depart!"

Some important affairs of Ingersoll's ever-crowded life required his presence, near the end of March, far away in Toronto, Canada; and it was there

[1] *The Complete Writings of Walt Whitman*, Camden edition, vol. i., Introduction, p. lxxxix.

that the electric current, which has done so much to consummate the living death of modern poets, brought to him the news of the actual death of Walt Whitman.

So when the former reached the little cottage in Mickle Street, Camden, on March 30th, he found that the hour was growing late; that the "common folk" whom Whitman had loved, and who loved in turn,—now even more than in life,—the soldier-nurse and singer of "Chants Democratic," had already been and departed: there were cheap flowers, moist with dearer tears, and tears alone that were dearer still, on the plain oak casket. But thousands of the more cultured had gathered out in Harleigh Cemetery, where Whitman, in life, had wished to rest in death; and there, in the presence of those who would perhaps more clearly understand, if they did not more keenly mourn and sympathize, the great orator might fulfil the last sad office,—the last sad promise,—of a deep and sacred friendship. For it was the expressed wish of Whitman, that Ingersoll, who, as we have seen, had already placed a wreath 'on the brow of the living,' should place the wreath on the brow of the dead.

How gracefully did the orator's first words blend the candor of his lifelong philosophy with his admiration for the silent poet!—

"My Friends: Again we, in the mystery of Life, are brought face to face with the mystery of Death. A great man, a great American,

the most eminent citizen of this Republic, lies dead before us, and we have met to pay a tribute to his greatness and his worth." (xii 473)

It would be obviously inexpedient to present here the whole of this memorable tribute. We can only examine particular passages as we proceed. In so doing, let us see if any reader will fail to pause in silent awe and admiration, as before a painting by Angelo, at this portrait of the author of *Leaves of Grass*:—

"He was built on a broad and splendid plan—ample, without appearing to have limitations—passing easily for a brother of mountains and seas and constellations; caring nothing for the little maps and charts with which timid pilots hug the shore, but giving himself freely with recklessness of genius to winds and waves and tides; caring for nothing as long as the stars were above him. He walked among men, among writers, among verbal varnishers and veneerers, among literary milliners and tailors, with the unconscious majesty of an antique god." (xii 474)

He was the poet of life and love,—the poet of the natural. "He was not only the poet of democracy, not only the poet of the Great Republic, but he was the poet of the human race." And, finally, "he was the poet of Death." But "he was, above all things, a man; and above genius, above all the snow-capped peaks of intelligence, above all art, rises the true man."

Conscious of Whitman's imperfections and limitations, acknowledging the artistic and intellectual defects and deficiencies of the "Good Grey Poet," Ingersoll yet had the poetic instinct, insight, and

understanding,—the mental amplitude,—to declare of him:—

"He has uttered more supreme words than any writer of our century, possibly of almost any other" (xii 475)

And:—

"He wrote a liturgy for mankind; he wrote a great and splendid psalm of life, and he gave to us the gospel of humanity—the greatest gospel that can be preached." (xii 476)

Of the poet's serenity at the approach of death, he said:—

"He never lost his hope. When the mists filled the valleys, he looked upon the mountain tops, and when the mountains in darkness disappeared, he fixed his gaze upon the stars.

"In his brain were the blessed memories of the day, and in his heart were mingled the dawn and dusk of life.

"He was not afraid; he was cheerful every moment. The laughing nymphs of day did not desert him. They remained that they might clasp the hands and greet with smiles the veiled and silent sisters of the night. And when they did come, Walt Whitman stretched his hand to them. On one side were the nymphs of the day, and on the other the silent sisters of the night, and so, hand in hand, between smiles and tears, he reached his journey's end.

"From the frontier of life, from the western wave-kissed shore, he sent us messages of content and hope, and these messages seem now like strains of music blown by the 'Mystic Trumpeter' from Death's pale realm." (xii 476)

After listening to this deep and soulful melody, this almost lyrical sweetness, how can we but declare, as did Keats in the summer moonlight,—the fragrant air tremulous with the song of the nightingale: "Now more than ever seems it rich to die"?

And yet Ingersoll, adding still further from the depths of affection, of pathos,—of beauty,—terms his tribute a "little wreath":—

> "And so I lay this little wreath upon this great man's tomb. I loved him living, and I love him still." (xii 477)

It may be a little wreath. Surely Ingersoll must have known. But who, I ask, shall garland the tomb of him who wove it?

CHAPTER VIII.

FROM EIGHTEEN NINETY-THREE TO EIGHTEEN NINETY-SIX

AS IS already evident, Ingersoll was the pronouncer of many eulogies of the dead; but of all his contributions to what I shall venture to term elegiac prose-poetry, none, perhaps, is more interesting, as far as the memory of Ingersoll himself is concerned, than the one which was made in the little town of Dowagiac, Mich., on January 25, 1893. The family of Philo D. Beckwith, in pursuance of an ideal which he had dearly cherished, but which he had not yet realized at the time of his death, had caused to be erected for the benefit of the people among whom he had risen from poverty to fortune, in the manufacture of stoves, a theater in which should be seen and heard only the highest and noblest in drama and music. When Ingersoll, in the fitness of things, came to dedicate this theater to the memory of the generous dead, he was far less profoundly impressed by its magnificent and luxurious interior than by its rather plain and simple exterior; for the latter, despite its truly monumental perspective, was seen to be scarcely as memorial of the

individual philanthropist concerned as of genius in general. Conspicuous in the entablature of this palace of music and song, of mirth and tragedy, the orator beheld a series of medallion portraits of such of his artistic and intellectual idols as Shakespeare, Voltaire, Paine, Wagner, and Whitman. Nor was this all that he beheld. Mr. Beckwith had possessed profound admiration and affection for the individual who had done more than any other that had ever lived, to destroy superstition; and, accordingly, beside that of Shakespeare, on the exterior of the second memorial theater to be erected—the handsomest theater of its size in the world—had been placed a medallion portrait of Ingersoll himself.

§ 2.

During the following year, Ingersoll published three more original lectures: *Abraham Lincoln*, which, as a literary masterpiece, ranks first after *Shakespeare; Voltaire*, which ranks second; and *About the Holy Bible*.

It is biographically interesting and important to note that the above-mentioned lecture on Voltaire is not the one originally written. Nor is it probably the equal of the latter, which was prepared some twenty years earlier, and which, therefore, likely contained (though it scarcely seems possible) more verve and ardor. Written in Peoria, it was delivered in the First Unitarian Church of

that city,—under no slight emotional strain, as may readily be imagined. To eulogize Voltaire from a pulpit!—that was almost too great a privilege. The whereabouts of the manuscript of this lecture is unknown. The present lecture was first delivered in Chicago, under the auspices of the Chicago Press Club, to an audience of six thousand people, five hundred being seated on the stage. There is in the annals of oratory no nobler, grander passage than one which this production contains—the one in which the body of Voltaire rests upon the ruins of the Bastile!—

"On reaching Paris the great procession moved along the Rue St. Antoine. Here it paused, and for one night upon the ruins of the Bastile rested the body of Voltaire—rested in triumph, in glory—rested on fallen wall and broken arch, on crumbling stone still damp with tears, on rusting chain and bar and useless bolt—above the dungeons dark and deep,where light had faded from the lives of men, and hope had died in breaking hearts.

"The conqueror resting upon the conquered.—Throned upon the Bastile, the fallen fortress of Night, the body of Voltaire, from whose brain had issued the Dawn." (iii 244)

§ 3.

Is Suicide A Sin, a short letter printed in the New York *World*, was so flagrantly misunderstood and so bitterly attacked, by clergymen and others, as to call forth from the great humanitarian a second letter. The intense interest and excitement occasioned by this controversy, second only to those aroused by *A Christmas Sermon*, did not wholly subside for nearly four years.

The Foundations of Faith were assailed in a lecture published with that title in 1895.

§ 4.

The most memorable happening of that year, however, if not the most memorable happening of all his later years, was the reunion of the surviving members of his old war regiment, the Eleventh Illinois Cavalry, at Elmwood, on September 5th. The reunion was a joint one, members of five other Illinois regiments taking part. Thousands of veterans not only, but others,—representative men and women,—were present. It was therefore something more than a reunion of the maimed and scarred and gray, who, in the flush and vigor of manhood, had borne the Stars and Stripes from Bull Run to Appomattox,—pathetic, memorable, and inspiring as such a reunion always is. Nor did its significance to Ingersoll lie solely in the fact that he was a veteran colonel; for, in addition, he was the honored guest, and of course the orator, of the occasion.

The greeting which was extended by the veterans to their old commander and comrade was as touching, pathetic, and cordial as greeting ever was—a time for reminiscences and hearty good will; and the greeting which was extended by citizens in general was that of a community to one whom it loves, by whom it feels honored, and of whom it feels proud; for Elmwood is not far from Peoria.

When, therefore, the special train bearing Ingersoll (accompanied by some five hundred of the prominent citizens of Peoria) arrived in Elmwood, pictures and busts of him were to be seen in all windows. He was met at the station by a reception committee, and afterwards, escorted by an army of veterans, he marched to the west side of the public square. There he passed between lines of his old friends and comrades. "We're glad to see you, 'Bob,'" came the shout to him who, in the old days, was accustomed to receive from the same source the formal military salute. "I have attended many soldiers' reunions," says Colonel Clark E. Carr, "but I never attended another one when there was so much affection and devotion manifested by officers and men of the regiment as was manifested for him. To them, what mattered it whether they agreed or not in politics, or in religion? There was their old colonel; and every man expressed in tears, which he vainly endeavored to conceal, that he knew his name was graven upon that great, generous, loving heart."[1] As Colonel Ingersoll was escorted to the stand from which he was to review the parade of the veterans, he was saluted with thirteen guns from Peoria's historic cannon.

After the conclusion of the parade, and following certain exercises, a part of which was the rendering of a song to Ingersoll, composed for the occasion

[1] Address delivered before the survivors of the Eleventh Illinois Cavalry, Studebaker Hall, Chicago, August 6, 1899.

by Mr. E. R. Brown, the latter introduced Ingersoll as "the greatest of living orators," referring to Ingersoll's declaration of a quarter-century before, in Rouse's Hall, Peoria, that thenceforth there would be "one free man in Illinois," and expressing gratitude for what Ingersoll had since accomplished for the freedom and happiness of mankind, by his mighty brain, his great spirit, and his gentle heart. The appearance of Ingersoll was the signal for a mighty shout that was heartily joined in by every one present. It was fully ten minutes before the cheering subsided, and as the orator attempted to speak, it was renewed, and he was forced to wait several minutes more. Then he began :—

"Ladies and Gentlemen, Fellow-citizens, Old Friends and Comrades :

"It gives me the greatest pleasure to meet again those with whom I became acquainted in the morning of my life. It is now afternoon. The sun of life is slowly sinking in the west, and, as the evening comes, nothing can be more delightful than to see again the faces that I knew in youth.

"When first I knew you the hair was brown; it is now white. The lines were not quite so deep, and the eyes were not quite so dim. Mingled with this pleasure is sadness,—sadness for those who have passed away—for the dead." (ix 497)

These are the first links of the golden chain with which, for an hour and a half, he held the vast audience before him. Rejoicing at the good fortune of his hearers in being citizens of "the first and grandest Republic ever established upon the face of the earth," he praised, in words impas-

sioned and beautiful, the deeds of her founders; presented, in graphic panorama, her political, agricultural, industrial, financial, and intellectual progress; and concluded with this touching tribute and farewell to those of her defenders who were present:—

"And what shall I say to you, survivors of the death-filled days? To you, my comrades, to you whom I have known in the great days, in the time when the heart beat fast and the blood flowed strong; in the days of high hope—what shall I say? All I can say is that my heart goes out to you, one and all. To you who bared your bosoms to the storms of war; to you who left loved ones, to die if need be, for the sacred cause. May you live long in the land you helped to save; may the winter of your age be as green as spring, as full of blossoms as summer, as generous as autumn, and may you, surrounded by plenty, with your wives at your sides and your grandchildren on your knees, live long. And when at last the fires of life burn low; when you enter the deepening dusk of the last of many, many happy days; when your brave hearts beat weak and slow, may the memory of your splendid deeds; deeds that freed your fellow-men; deeds that kept your country on the map of the world; deeds that kept the flag of the Republic in the air—may the memory of these deeds fill your souls with peace and perfect joy. Let it console you to know that you are not to be forgotten. Centuries hence your story will be told in art and song, and upon your honored graves flowers will be lovingly laid by millions of men and women now unborn." (ix 530)

Julius Caesar was both a great soldier and a great orator; but if he ever addressed to his veteran legions a passage as eloquent as this, it was not preserved to thrill the hearts and dim the eyes of posterity.

§ 5.

In Chapter I, it was stated, with regret, that Ing-

ersoll left no autobiography of the ordinary kind. It is here stated, with pleasure, that he did leave one of the extraordinary kind—an autobiography of his mental life. To be sure, it lacks much in that comprehensiveness and exhaustiveness of detail,—that searching self-analysis,—which are so desirable in such a work. It does not favorably compare in these respects with the *Discourse on Method*, by Descartes, the *Confessions* of Rousseau, nor the *Autobiography* of Spencer. We may be certain, however, that it possesses, page for page, fully as high a literary and esthetic value as any of these, while it is, at the same time, far from deficient in the more substantial qualities of intellect.

Why I Am An Agnostic, a lecture, published in 1896, gives a succinct, clear, and interesting account of Ingersoll's literary and philosophical evolution. It is a charming and fascinating story of his intellectual voyage, from the shifting sands and changeful mists of boyhood's mental shore, across life's perilous ocean, to the rock-like convictions that lie in the calm and silvered harbor of age. Never did a group of simple folk around a returned navigator of the Middle Ages listen with more enthralled attention to tales of adventure among the strange inhabitants of mysterious lands in far-off seas than did the most enlightened audiences at the close of the nineteenth century to this story of Ingersoll's mental voyage.

Why I Am An Agnostic was the crowning work of Ingersoll's anti-theological career. It gave, in a coherent and unified form, as no other work had done, a frank and lucid account of the multitudinous factors and influences that had shaped his mental course—an analytic description of the foundation on which he finally stood. As you read the first pages of this unique mental autobiography,—this confession of "the Agnostic faith,"—there is presented, in unmistakable clearness, the rural theology of fifty years ago. You view all its trappings and paraphernalia, become sensible of all its auxiliaries, and breathe the close and stifling atmosphere that hangs like a pall over the credulous multitude. "Environment is a sculptor—a painter," says Ingersoll; and so it is—with most of us. Not so with Ingersoll himself. In the very environment which I have described,—before the sombrous background of crude and provincial theology,—you watch, in *Why I Am An Agnostic*, the unfolding, the development, the ascending struggle, the enfranchisement, the triumph, of a great mind. Nor is the goal attained a merely negative one. You perceive not only the reasons for doubt, but the reasons for belief. You are shown not only why Ingersoll did not believe what others believed, but why he believed what he did believe; and few other great men have believed things more profoundly, or more profound things, than he.

§ 6.

On April 12th (1896), at the Columbia Theater, Chicago, he addressed the Militant Church on *How To Reform Mankind.* In this address, great in wisdom, in its profound insight into the depths of things; great in its love of humanity,—its pity for those who toil,—for the oppressed, the criminal, the despised; great in its epigram, its reasoning, its beauty, its eloquence, he gave expression to many of the reformatory ideas which we shall note in presenting, in subsequent chapters, his domestic and sociological teachings.

§ 7.

During the political campaign of this year, he again gave his mighty eloquence to the cause of Republicanism. And he gave something more—something more, even, than any other American could give: he gave his moral and intellectual prestige, a quality which, in the minds of millions of his fellow-citizens, was fully equal to his eloquence. For, whatever may have been the opinion of a few individuals twenty years before, it had become generally and definitely settled in 1896, that Robert G. Ingersoll was an absolutely honest man; that he was in no sense a politician; that he wanted nothing from the people; that it was beyond the power of any party to do him either harm

or honor; and that, therefore, if he classed himself in the ranks of the Republican party, it was because that party was going in his direction, that is, because it stood, in the main, for those political principles which he sincerely believed would bring "the greatest happiness for the greatest number" in this Republic. On such a foundation,—with the undisputed scepter of Polymnia in his hand, and the wreath of integrity upon his brow,—he was able to throw into the political balance greater weight than any other extra-political individual beneath the flag.

In this connection, the following extract from a letter of September 27, 1896, from Mr. Frank Gilbert, then political editor of the Chicago *Inter-Ocean*, is of interest:—

"I am delighted that you are to give us so many speeches. * * * I want to see the silver craze, not the man Bryan, honored with a regular Napoleonic tomb. Pile the stones up until there can be no body-snatching four years hence! In fact, it is high time for the American people to put a stop to the jeopardizing of business for campaign purposes. * * * That is the reason I want your voice heard. Of course, there is a personal element too. I just want the country to realize that the orator of orators still lives, and that the genius which flashed out at Cincinnati has lost none of its fire."

On October 8th and 29th, Ingersoll delivered in Chicago and New York, respectively, what has since been termed *The Chicago and New York Gold Speech.*

In Chicago, the meeting was held in a huge tent, near the corner of Sacramento Avenue and Lake

Street. It was filled from center-pole to circumference, by an audience of over twenty thousand, thousands more being unable to gain admittance.

In presenting the orator, the chairman, Mr. William P. McCabe, according to the Chicago *Inter-Ocean*, said, in part:—

"My duty is to introduce to you one whose big heart and big brain are filled with love and patriotic care for the things that concern the country he fought for and loves so well."

"'This world will see but one Ingersoll,'" said *The Inter-Ocean*, in the same report, quoting the spontaneous declaration of a celebrated statesman, in 1876, who had listened to the "Plumed Knight Speech." *The Inter-Ocean* continued:—

"That same sentiment, in thought, emotion, or vocal expression, emanated from upward of twenty thousand citizens last night who heard the eloquent and magic Ingersoll * * * as he expounded the living gospel of true republicanism.

"The old war-horse, silvered by long years of faithful service to his country, aroused the same all-pervading enthusiasm as he did in the campaigns of Grant and Hayes and Garfield.

"He has lost not one whit, not one iota, of his striking physical presence, his profound reasoning, his convincing logic, his rollicking wit, grandiloquence—in fine, all the graces of the orator of old, reinforced by increased patriotism and the ardor of the call to battle for his country, are still his in the fullest measure.

"Ingersoll in his powerful speech at Cincinnati, spoke in behalf of a friend; last night he pled for his country. In 1876 he eulogized a man; last night, twenty years afterward, he upheld the principles of democratic government. Such was the difference in his theme; the logic, the eloquence, of his utterances, was the more profound in the same ratio.

"He came to the ground-floor of human existence and talked as man to man. His patriotism, be it religion, sentiment, or that lofty

spirit inseparable from man's soul, is his life. Last night he sought to inspire those who heard him with the same loyalty, and he succeeded.

"Those passionate outbursts of eloquence, the wit that fairly scintillated, the logic as inexorable as heaven's decrees, his rich rhetoric and immutable facts driven straight to his hearers with the strength of bullets, aroused applause that came as spontaneous as sunlight."

This speech, published in full in the same issue of *The Inter-Ocean*, caused the sale of "more than forty thousand extra copies of that issue" of that paper alone (says *The Inter-Ocean* of July 22, 1899, editorially); "and the demand was only cut off by the publication of the speech, in pamphlet form, by the Republican State Central Committee. Fully one hundred thousand copies of the pamphlet were sent out by the committee, in response to calls from all over the country." How such popularity would delight the publisher of even your "best seller"!

Ingersoll's appearance in New York marked the final rally of the campaign there. Admission was by ticket only; but the fact that the rarest of oratorical viands and sparkling cordials from the same source and vintage as those which had thrilled the veins of the populace in 1876 were again to be served, brought together an audience which, not only because of size, but because of exclusiveness and intelligence, must have made even Ingersoll proud. Carnegie Music Hall, from the rear of its stage to the last row of seats in its deep gallery,

was crowded to its utmost capacity. As to enthusiasm, if we accept the well-grounded dictum of New Yorkers, that audiences in Carnegie Hall are not noted for this quality, then we must infer that New York audiences sometimes forget their surroundings; for the author can testify, from personal knowledge, that this audience was as enthusiastic as it was large and intelligent.

Referring to the orator's first sentence, a report states that "the assembly was his from that instant." This is only half the truth. The ovation with which he was greeted as he entered the hall, the many impatient cries, and the "Three cheers for Ingersoll!" unmistakably showed that "the assembly was his" long before he began to speak, if not long before he arrived. Indeed, there is little doubt that Ingersoll as a presidential candidate would have received more votes from that audience than did William McKinley. It was an Ingersoll assembly; he was not only the orator, but the personality, of the occasion. And whenever those who were present recall his appearance that evening,—sitting in a huge arm-chair on the stage, and leisurely, nonchalantly stroking the corresponding arm of the chair with his right hand, as he cast upward and to the front an occasional glance at the preceding speakers and the audience,—they will recall a description of another picture,—a picture of the great Humboldt,—a description by Ingersoll himself:—

"I have seen a picture of the old man, sitting upon a mountain side —above him the eternal snow—below, the smiling valley of the tropics, filled with vine and palm; his chin upon his breast, his eyes deep, thoughtful and calm—his forehead majestic—grander than the mountain upon which he sat—crowned with the snow of his whitened hair, he looked the intellectual autocrat of this world." (i 101)

But that actual picture on the platform, which this description of a picture on the mountain-side so vividly recalls, was soon disturbed. "There is no intelligent audience in the civilized world to which it would be necessary to introduce Robert G. Ingersoll," said the chairman, Mr. John E. Milholland; and the assembly burst into a pandemonium of vociferous approval and welcome, as the orator arose and advanced slowly, impressively, to the front of the stage. After a moment, the tremendous height and volume of applause not receding, Ingersoll raised his hand, and the applause diminished,—so much so that a lesser orator might have commenced to speak. But Ingersoll did not risk a word: he stood calm and serene. When, after several minutes, all ears were stopped with oppressive silence, and he felt that all eyes were centered upon him, he said:—

"Ladies and Gentlemen: This is *our* country. The legally expressed will of the majority is the supreme law of the land. *We* are responsible for what our Government does. We cannot excuse ourselves because of the act of some king, or the opinions of nobles. *We* are the kings. *We* are the nobles. *We* are the aristocracy of America, and when our Government does *right* we are honored, and when our Government does *wrong* the brand of shame is on the American brow." (ix 535)

The applause that followed this utterance, in which I have endeavored to indicate, with italics, the emphasis, rendered it almost as difficult for the orator to speak his next sentence as it had been for him to begin his first. He had struck with certain and virile hand the fundamental chords of true republicanism—of true democracy—and the heart-strings of every auditor were vibrating in unison with them.

Ingersoll had spoken only a few minutes when, in complete abandon to the subject, he began to indulge his habit of walking slowly, leisurely, from side to side. In almost the first of his trips, he encountered the traditional speaker's stand. Seizing it with his own hands, he carried it several paces toward the back of the stage, or as far as the front row of chairs thereon would permit. This afforded the free field which was so essentially a part of his theory and practice of oratory. In the latter, all emphasis, tone, gesture, came "from the inside"—from thought, sentiment, emotion.

Once, during this address, he paused suddenly, and, with a look of earnest appeal to the audience, exclaimed:—

"Oh, I forgot to ask the question, 'If the Government can make money why should it collect taxes?'

"Let us be honest. Here is a poor man with a little yoke of cattle, cultivating forty acres of stony ground, working like a slave in the heat of summer, in the cold blasts of winter, and the Government makes him pay ten dollars taxes, when, according to these gentlemen, it could issue a one-hundred-thousand-dollar bill in a second.

Issue the bill and give the fellow with the cattle a rest. Is it possible for the mind to conceive anything more absurd than that the Government can create money? (ix 574)

At another point, Ingersoll gave another example,—a strikingly beautiful one,—of his practice of suiting the outward manner to the inward thought and feeling in oratory. In illustration of his statement that everything is not to be measured by dollars and cents,—that "a thing is worth, sometimes, the thought that is in it, sometimes the genius,"—he said:—

"Here is a man buys a little piece of linen for twenty-five cents, he buys a few paints for fifteen cents, and a few brushes, and he paints a picture; just a little one; a picture, maybe, of a cottage with a dear old woman, white hair, serene forehead and satisfied eyes; at the corner a few hollyhocks in bloom—maybe a tree in blossom, and as you listen you seem to hear the songs of birds—the hum of bees, and your childhood all comes back to you as you look. You feel the dewy grass beneath your bare feet once again, and you go back until the dear old woman on the porch is young and fair. There is a soul there. Genius has done its work. And the little picture is worth five, ten, maybe fifty thousand dollars. All the result of labor and genius." (ix 561)

At the words "and he paints a picture," Ingersoll, having just turned to face the left, fixed his gaze steadily on the wall, as an imaginary canvas, gracefully executing with the right hand the motions of an artist before an easel. As he uttered, in exquisitely modulated tones, the clause "and you go back until the dear old woman on the porch is young and fair," many of his hearers were moved to tears; and when the last word gave the

final touch to the painting, there were numerous expressions, both voiced and mute, of astonishment and delight. Not that this rather colloquial passage is considered artistically worthy of comparison with any of Ingersoll's loftiest inspirations. For it produced its effect largely by appealing, through a masterly delivery, to familiar associations, comparing with his really sublime productions in about the same ratio as do the music of *Old Folks at Home* and of *Die Walküre*. It is, however, just such a picture as one would have expected Ingersoll to paint that night: for he was dealing with familiar things; and he spoke "as man to man." And with what consummate ease! For an hour and a half,—as though it were pastime,—he handled the three problems of "money," "the tariff," "government," as easily as the most skilful juggler keeps only as many baubles in the air. The applause was almost continuous.

Whatever disappointments or delights may have been, or may be, the lot of other visitors to Carnegie Music Hall, those who were present there during the evening of October 29, 1896, will not forget how imposingly and impressively Robert G. Ingersoll filled the stage in his last political speech.

CHAPTER IX.

FROM EIGHTEEN NINETY-SEVEN TO EIGHTEEN NINETY-NINE

TWO lectures, *The Truth* and *A Thanksgiving Sermon*, were published in 1897. The orator's attitude toward the subject of the first, and the objects and recipients of his gratitude and thankfulness in the second, may be safely left, for the present at least, to inference and imagination. These lectures are among the rarest of Ingersoll's artistic and intellectual treats.

§ 2.

Even those whose knowledge of Ingersoll has been derived solely from the preceding pages will not be surprised at the statement, that, in common with many other individuals of genius, he was a passionate lover of music. Of its origin he once said:—

"Music expresses feeling and thought, without language. It was below and before speech, and it is above and beyond all words. Beneath the waves is the sea—above the clouds is the sky.

"Before man found a name for any thought, or thing, he had hopes and fears and passions, and these were rudely expressed in tones.

"Of one thing, however, I am certain, and that is, that Music was

born of Love. Had there never been any human affection, there never could have been uttered a strain of music. Possibly some mother, looking in the eyes of her babe, gave the first melody to the enraptured air." (xii 128)

Could anything be tenderer than the last sentence? It will, however, doubtless surprise many to learn, that, at the same time, he did not, as he himself remarked, know "one note from another." He did not need to know: he had a heart and a brain. By this, I do not mean, that, like so many others, he had, in his thorax, merely a mechanical apparatus which pumped red ice-water, and, in his cranium, merely an extremely accurate physico-psychical contrivance for examining and analyzing facts, and forming conclusions. I mean that he had feeling and imagination, in their fullest, highest, and noblest sense—the elemental passion, instinct, and insight of which all art is born; which can neither be taught nor learned; which are coexistent with genius; and which, without knowing why, recognize their kind as invariably, as inevitably, as the nodding violet catches the image of its perfumed self in the stainless bosom of the meadow stream.

And not only did he have the most fitting and adequate appreciation of music of all kinds, from the vocal solo to the choral, "from the hand-organ to the orchestra": he could describe this appreciation,—the impressions which music made upon him. In the presence of a flower; at sight of a

sunset, a star; in the hearing of "music yearning like a god in pain,"—most men are dumb; but the poet is moved to expression. Proof of the unusually profound depths to which Ingersoll was stirred by music is not only a part of the precious memories of all who were near and dear to him: there is an abundance of such proof in his works. This varies from the merest fanciful word-picture of tone, melody, harmony, as occurring in the simplest pieces, to the most profound, subtle, and strangely beautiful conceptions of the greatest productions of the greatest composer.

Thus, in Ingersoll's posthumous writings is this random "fragment" in appreciation of the voice of Scalchi:—

"Imagine amethysts, rubies, diamonds, emeralds and opals mingled as liquids—then imagine these marvelous glories of light and color changed to a tone, and you have the wondrous, the incomparable voice of Scalchi." (xii 356)

And this, of "The Organ":—

"The beginnings—the timidities—the half-thoughts—blushes—suggestions—a phrase of grace and feeling—a sustained note—the wing on the wind—confidence—the flight—rising with many harmonies that unite in the voluptuous swell—in the passionate tremor—rising still higher—flooding the great dome with the soul of enraptured sound." (xii 356)

After reading only these few lines, in the light of previous knowledge of their author, can we wonder that many a musician, instinct with the artist's yearning for sympathy and approval, was

drawn to Ingersoll in the ties of a friendship which only death could sever? The following "fragment," written in August, 1880, is not only most interesting evidence of one such friendship, but furnishes additional proof of Ingersoll's high and noble appreciation of music, and his ability to convey to others, in language as subtly sweet as the strains of the violin itself, expressions of that appreciation :—

"This week the great violinist Edouard Remenyi, as my guest, visited the Bass Rocks House, Cape Ann, Mass., and for three days delighted and entranced the fortunate idlers of the beach. He played nearly all the time, night and day, seemingly carried away with his own music. Among the many selections given, were the andante from the Tenth Sonata in E flat, also from the Twelfth Sonata in G minor, by Mozart. Nothing could exceed the wonderful playing of the selections from the Twelfth Sonata. A hush as of death fell upon the audience, and when he ceased, tears fell upon applauding hands. Then followed the Elegie from Ernst; then 'The Ideal Dance' composed by himself—a fairy piece, full of wings and glancing feet, moonlight and melody, where fountains fall in showers of pearl, and waves of music die on sands of gold—then came the 'Barcarole' by Schubert, and he played this with infinite spirit, in a kind of inspired frenzy, as though music itself were mad with joy; then the grand Sonata in G, in three movements, by Beethoven." (xii 349)

> "Where fountains fall in showers of pearl,
> And waves of music die on sands of gold."

Indeed, the frenzied bow of the master will make its many journeys, and we shall linger long in the enchanted realms of Wordsworth and Keats and Swinburne, before our senses are pained again by a strain so enamored of the Elysian fields.

In another "fragment," Ingersoll writes of Remenyi's playing :—

> "In my mind the old tones are still rising and falling—still throbbing, pleading, beseeching, imploring, wailing like the lost—rising winged and triumphant, superb and victorious—then caressing, whispering every thought of love—intoxicated, delirious with joy—panting with passion—fading to silence as softly and imperceptibly as consciousness is lost in sleep." (xii 350)

We shall not wonder at the praise bestowed in these descriptions if we consider that, at the time of their writing, Remenyi, who had just completed a tour of the world, was aglow with renewed inspiration naturally incident to personal association with the foremost musical masters then living, including Brahms, Liszt, and Wagner.

Remenyi's admiration of, and fondness for, Ingersoll were most intense. The violinist was a frequent guest of the orator, whose self and family he would delight by the hour with his marvelous music. His *Liberty* is dedicated to Ingersoll; and I once saw an envelope that was addressed in Remenyi's peculiar hand, "To Col. Robert G. Ingersoll, the World's Brain Progenitor." Remenyi seems to have been both as sturdy as a lion and as playful as a kitten. Naturally the latter side of his personality was unreservedly manifested toward his genial, sunny-hearted friend. This is best seen in his amusing and altogether delightful letters. They would usually begin with some such salutation as, "Dear Colonellibus," or "Dear Ing-

ersollibus," or both, and, after running the gamut of affectionate friendship, would end with, " Love to allll," from " Your porridge prodigy and admiring friend, the old fiddler." They are, indeed, amusing and delightful. Thus one of them, written in Chicago, on February 8, 1892, indulges the hope that Ingersoll (to arrive later) may evade the thousands of other friends long enough to " come and take lunch with me and my friend Dr. E. H. Pratt, who is the very bigggestest surgeon doctor on this Globe." Another letter, announcing a prospective visit to " 400 (5th Avenue)," concludes with the warning: " * * * and then *woe* to you. I will suffocate you with music." One of these communications, not too intimate for publication, shall here be introduced in full, and without sacrificing (to the ruthless rules of grammar!) a whit of the unique musical genius and littérateur who penned it:—

" 73 West 85th Street,
" N. York,
" Thursday—12 Aug. 1897.

" *To*
" *Col. Robert Ingersoll*
" *Somewhere*
" *Anywhere*
" *and*
" *Everywhere.*

" Dear Jupiter:

" Here *I is* at last in N. York, and I long to see you—and to see you all—Are you, are you all in good *H*ealth, because this *H*ealth matter is *the* thing—I *knows* it *now*, since I have been partly—mostly on the other side—Now I appreciate my *good* health—and I take

precious good care of it—and to-day it is the 342d day that I am living on milk—and apples, and *rough-shoed* bread, but which is good enough for me, as it keeps me not only in ship-shape order, but through the apples in *apple-pie* order—without the actual pie entering into my system—but *all* this is *much too much* about me—but what is the principal thing, *is*, that I hope to see you all soon—whereupon I will conclude my present epistolary with many lovable salaams to you, my prophet—and to you all—

"Affectionately
"yours,
"ED REMENYI."

From this digression, so naturally incidental to Ingersoll's appreciation of Remenyi's genius (and vice versa), we turn to Ingersoll's appreciation of music in general. In so doing, we come, in logical progression, to his description of the Sixth Symphony (Beethoven):—

"This sound-wrought picture of the fields and woods, of flowering hedge and happy home, where thrushes build and swallows fly, and mothers sing to babes; this echo of the babbled lullaby of brooks that, dallying, wind and fall where meadows bare their daisied bosoms to the sun; this joyous mimicry of summer rain, the laugh of children, and the rhythmic rustle of the whispering leaves; this strophe of peasant life; this perfect poem of content and love." (ii 435)

Although it seem incredible, there was another music which Ingersoll appreciated far more than that referred to in this and preceding quotations. That was because there was a far greater music. The account of his anticipation and discovery of the latter,—the story of his musical evolution,—is as interesting as that of his intellectual evolution, in *Why I Am An Agnostic*. He says:—

"During all my life, of course, like other people, I had heard what they call music, and I had my favorite pieces, most of those favorite pieces being favorites on account of association; and nine-tenths of the music that is beautiful to the world is beautiful because of the association; not because the music is good, but because of association. * * *

"Now, I always felt that there must be some greater music somewhere, somehow. You know this little music that comes back with recurring emphasis every two inches or every three-and-a-half inches; I thought there ought to be music somewhere with a great sweep from horizon to horizon, and that could fill the great dome of sound with winged notes like the eagle; if there was not such music, somebody, some time, would make it, and I was waiting for it. One day I heard it, and I said, 'What music is that? Who wrote that?' I felt it everywhere. I was cold. I was almost hysterical. It answered to my brain, to my heart; not only to association, but to all there was of hope and aspiration, all my future; and they said, 'This is the music of Wagner.'" (xii 173)

Richard Wagner was one of the gods on whose altar Ingersoll reverently laid the offerings of his great and tender soul. Had Ingersoll been a musician, he would have made as devout a pilgrimage to Wagner as Wagner made to Beethoven; and we know, that, had Ingersoll arrived in time at the shrine of Wagner, one of the most unobtrusive of Americans, as well as one of the most obtrusive of Englishmen, would have accompanied "the Shakespeare of music" to the home of the blind composer. For the genius of Wagner, Ingersoll poured out the same unstinted glorification with which he embellished the tombs of Shakespeare, Burns, Voltaire, and Lincoln. "Some things," he said, "are immortal: The plays of Shakespeare, the marbles of the Greeks, and the music of

Wagner." (iii 56) He went even further than this; he declared it as his belief, that the human mind had reached its limit in the three departments concerned. It was his unqualified opinion, notwithstanding his confidence in the future splendor of our race, that man would never produce "anything greater, sublimer, than the marbles of the Greeks" nor the dramas of Shakespeare, and that the time would never come "when any man, with such instruments of music as we now have, and having nothing but the common air that we now breathe, will * * * produce greater pictures in sound, greater music, than Wagner. Never! never!" (xii 177) And why did Ingersoll hold this opinion? Because he believed that the Greek sculptors and Shakespeare and Wagner had expressed in marble, language, and sound, respectively, all that the heart and brain ever were, are, or ever will be, capable of appreciating. He believed, that, just as the air gets from the earth and the ocean as much only as it is capable of receiving; so there is a limit to what the soul can receive from the oceans and continents of music: and he believed that this limit,—the supreme degree of harmonic saturation,—the dew-point of melody,—was, and forever would be, Richard Wagner.

Without a demonstration, it were difficult to believe that even Ingersoll could have expressed in common words more fitting and wonderful descriptions of music,—that he could have woven in

imagination's loom more subtly rare and delicate conceptions,—than those which have been quoted. But his felicity of description, always apace with his appreciation, has given us the following justification of "the music of the future":—

"In Wagner's music there is a touch of chaos that suggests the infinite. The melodies seem strange and changing forms, like summer clouds, and weird harmonies come like sounds from the sea brought by fitful winds, and others moan like waves on desolate shores, and mingled with these, are shouts of joy, with sighs and sobs and ripples of laughter, and the wondrous voices of eternal love." (xii 129)

After the following poetic vision can we wonder at Ingersoll's opinion, that Wagner will remain eternally supreme—that he has expressed in sound all that the heart and brain of man are capable of receiving?—

"When I listen to the music of Wagner, I see pictures, forms, glimpses of the perfect, the swell of a hip, the wave of a breast, the glance of an eye. I am in the midst of great galleries. Before me are passing the endless panoramas. I see vast landscapes with valleys of verdure and vine, with soaring crags, snow-crowned. I am on the wide seas, where countless billows burst into the whitecaps of joy. I am in the depths of caverns roofed with mighty crags, while through some rent I see the eternal stars. In a moment the music becomes a river of melody, flowing through some wondrous land; suddenly it falls in strange chasms, and the mighty cataract is changed to seven-hued foam." (xii 129)

If all of Ingersoll's critics could see half as much in fifty actual landscape-paintings, what a wondrously artistic people we should be!

And who, after viewing this picture of the dawn,

will not derive a nobler, grander delight from the music of Wagner? Who will not see in the latter the glimmer of the morning-star, the retreating darkness, and catch the light-like shimmer of melody from the violins?—

"The music of Wagner has color, and when I hear the violins, the morning seems to slowly come. A horn puts a star above the horizon. The night, in the purple hum of the base, wanders away like some enormous bee across wide fields of dead clover. The light grows whiter as the violins increase. Colors come from other instruments, and then the full orchestra floods the world with day." (xii 130)

Next to the composer of divine harmonies,—the sculptor in sound,—the painter in viewless air; next to him who, in nature's every tone,—from the first faint whisper when April amorous smiles, to the monstrous thunder-sobs of night,—tells of the joys and sorrows, the loves and hatreds, the despair, the hopes, the aspirations and the triumphs,—the sunlit shallows and the murky deeps of human life—next to him is his interpreter. For, although the composer is the only one who seeks expression in a universal tongue, he is the very one who is least often understood. He has many readers, but few interpreters. Millions read his notes on paper; but few there are who read them in his heart and brain,—who really and truly feel and understand them,—and whose own emotion and intellect are the inevitable medium of their perfect and instinctive interpretation.

So it is, after all, the interpreter who enables

the lover of music to enjoy the genius of his favorite master; and Ingersoll regarded Anton Seidl as not only the greatest leader in the world, but "the noblest, tenderest and the most artistic interpreter" of Wagner that had ever lived. When this prince of conductors raised his baton, Ingersoll was enraptured. Of all the Wagnerian numbers, he was fondest of *Tristan und Isolde*,—"that Mississippi of melody." A gentleman who was intimately associated with Ingersoll told the author, that, on many occasions, during the rendition of this and other Wagnerian compositions by Seidl's orchestra, he had seen "the Colonel" entirely overcome, the tears coursing down his cheeks. That was because he was a perfectly developed human being, with all the emotions equally responsive. As he naturally and necessarily laughed at the risible, so he naturally and necessarily wept at the sad; and

> "Great music is always sad, because it tells us of the perfect; and such is the difference between what we are and that which music suggests, that even in the vase of joy we find some tears." (xii 130)

It was the same with him when in the presence of beauty in any other art. But not to digress: Seidl himself once said, that, of all the people whom he had met, Ingersoll was the most sensitive to music. The following incident is here in point. After a Philharmonic concert, at which selections from *Parsifal* were given, and which Ingersoll and

family attended, all, including Seidl, were seated in the Ingersoll home.

"Everything seemed to be all right to-night, Seidl, except the harp," remarked Ingersoll, adding as to where, in his judgment, it should have been placed with relation to the other instruments.

"Great God!" exclaimed the conductor, springing to his feet. "You are the only man, but one, whom I have ever heard make that criticism, and that man was Richard Wagner!"

Aware of such musical sensitiveness as this on Ingersoll's part, can we wonder, I ask again, at his opinion that Wagner had expressed in sound all that the heart and brain of man are capable of receiving? And can we wonder that he formed with Anton Seidl another of those friendships which was severed only by death,—the death of the great interpreter?

As had been the case on the death of Whitman, Ingersoll was absent from home; and the cold, laconic click of the telegraph told him of the death of Seidl. But who would not have recognized, regardless of its date and signature, the author of the following telegram, which was sent to Mrs. Seidl from Pittsburg, on March 30, 1898?—

"We know that your heart is breaking. Our tears fall not only for him, but for you. It does not seem possible that the wonderful brain in which dwelt the greatest harmonies—the divinest melodies—has passed to the silence of death. Do not despair. You have left a wreath of sacred memories and many friends. We clasp your empty hands."

As this message would indicate, and as would naturally be inferred from all that precedes it, the death of Seidl touched Ingersoll sadly and profoundly. If we can properly apply here the well-known psychological truth, that an individual suffers to the same extent that he enjoys, then the death of Seidl, who had for many years been the very source of some of Ingersoll's keenest joys, must indeed have been to the latter a deep and bitter sorrow.

As we have seen, it had for more than twenty years been Ingersoll's practice to speak, in person, words of love and eulogy above his dead. On the death of Seidl, however, he was unable to be present in New York; and there was not time to communicate by mail. His tribute to the great conductor is therefore notable not only for being the only one which Ingersoll ever delivered *in absentia*, but the only one which he or any one else, perhaps, ever delivered through the media of the telegraph and a reader.

Since 1846, many millions of telegrams have been transmitted; but it is more than probable that the following, filed at Wheeling, W. Va., on March 30, 1898, is the most wonderful of them all:—

"In the noon and zenith of his career, in the flush and glory of success, Anton Seidl, the greatest orchestral leader of all time, the perfect interpreter of Wagner, of all his subtlety and sympathy, his heroism and grandeur, his intensity and limitless passion, his won-

drous harmonies that tell of all there is in life, and touch the longings and the hopes of every heart, has passed from the shores of sound to the realm of silence, borne by the mysterious and resistless tide that ever ebbs but never flows.

"All moods were his. Delicate as the perfume of the first violet, wild as the storm, he knew the music of all sounds, from the rustle of leaves, the whisper of hidden springs, to the voices of the sea.

"He was the master of music, from the rhythmical strains of irresponsible joy to the sob of the funeral march.

"He stood like a king with his sceptre in his hand, and we knew that every tone and harmony were in his brain, every passion in his breast, and yet his sculptured face was as calm, as serene as perfect art. He mingled his soul with the music and gave his heart to the enchanted air.

"He appeared to have no limitations, no walls, no chains. He seemed to follow the pathway of desire, and the marvelous melodies, the sublime harmonies, were as free as eagles above the clouds with outstretched wings.

"He educated, refined, and gave unspeakable joy to many thousands of his fellow-men. He added to the grace and glory of life. He spoke a language deeper, more poetic than words—the language of the perfect, the language of love and death.

"But he is voiceless now; a fountain of harmony has ceased. Its inspired strains have died away in night, and all its murmuring melodies are strangely still.

"We will mourn for him, we will honor him, not in words, but in the language that he used.

"Anton Seidl is dead. Play the great funeral march. Envelop him in music. Let its wailing waves cover him. Let its wild and mournful winds sigh and moan above him. Give his face to its kisses and its tears.

"Play the great funeral march, music as profound as death. That will express our sorrow—that will voice our love, our hope, and that will tell of the life, the triumph, the genius, the death of Anton Seidl." (xii 487)

Before the echoes of the last sentence,—the last crescendo,—died away, the conductor of the orchestra raised his baton; and the first strains of

the Siegfried march mingled the sorrow of the greatest composer "for all the dead" with the sorrow of the greatest orator for Anton Seidl.

§ 3.

Superstition was delivered, for the first time, on Sunday October 16th, in Chicago. In this lecture, Ingersoll surveyed, with the intuitive instinct and insight of the poet,—the analytical penetration and astronomical scope of the philosopher,—the entire realm of thought. With reason as his standard, guide, and touchstone, he began, as he invariably did, at the foundation, by specifying the several mental operations which must be classed as superstition; and he declared: "The foundation of superstition is ignorance, the superstructure is faith, and the dome is a vain hope." (iv 295) He then analytically examined, as typical, many of the superstitions of mankind,—from that of the simple female, to that of the learned theologian "of the most authentic creed"; and he placed all on precisely the same intellectual plane. He found that there is as much evidence for the belief that the dropping of a dishcloth from the hand of a woman means "company" as for the belief that the dropping of a world from the hand of Time means an Infinite Personality independent of and superior to nature. There was as much philosophical profundity in the mind of the girl who counts the leaves of a flower and says: "'One, he comes; two, he

tarries; three, he courts; four, he marries; five, he goes away,'" as there was in the mind of the theological astronomer who sees in the glimmer of a distant sun the image of the "Great First Cause." A shower of petals in the sunlight, from the dimpled hand of a maiden, was just as convincing as a shower of stars from the hand of Time, in the dusky dome of night. In nature's infinite realm—throughout the thoughtless eons past—nothing had occurred, or had failed to occur, with reference to man. So far as "design," "plan," and "purpose" were concerned, a man and a petal were the same. Hence, to believe in any form, phase, or manifestation of the supernatural, was simply superstition.

But this lecture was something more than a classification,—something more than a declaration as to what is, and what is not, superstition. As the latter, born of ignorance, had given us, in its multifarious forms, all there is of evil; so science, born of intelligence, had given us all there is of good. We must therefore abandon superstition and the supernatural, and depend absolutely upon intelligence and the natural,—upon reason and science:—

"Science is the real redeemer. It will put honesty above hypocrisy; mental veracity above all belief. It will teach the religion of usefulness. It will destroy bigotry in all its forms. It will put thoughtful doubt above thoughtless faith. It will give us philosophers, thinkers and savants, instead of priests, theologians and saints. It will abolish poverty and crime, and greater, grander, nobler than all else, it will make the whole world free." (iv 349)

This, in brief, was the positive element of the lecture,—its cardinal conclusion. But it contained many minor ones; and of these, the most startling to theologians, if not the most important, concerned the Prince of Darkness. It was declared by Ingersoll, after a most critical examination of the Bible, that,—notwithstanding the terrible evils which have always followed, and which must ever follow, belief in the supernatural, in miracles, inspiration, signs and wonders, amulets and charms, witchcraft, evil spirits, and all the rest of superstition's brood,—the Christian world could not deny the existence of the Devil; that he was really "the keystone of the arch"; and that to take him away was to destroy the entire system.

"A great many clergymen answered or criticised this statement. Some of these ministers avowed their belief in the existence of his Satanic Majesty, while others actually denied his existence; but some, without stating their own position, said that others believed, not in the existence of a personal devil, but in the personification of evil, and that all references to the Devil in the Scriptures could be explained on the hypothesis that the Devil thus alluded to was simply a personification of evil." (iv 353)

That the clergy ever made a greater mistake with reference to Ingersoll than in assuming this attitude concerning the Devil, is very doubtful. "But what were the clergy to do?" may be asked. The answer is easy. There was but one thing that

they wisely and consistently could have done: they could have kept silence. This would, indeed, have been "golden." But they had evidently gained no prudence from *My Reviewers Reviewed;* from the experiences of Black, Field, Gladstone, and Manning; nor from those afforded by *A Christmas Sermon* and *Is Suicide A Sin?* They had not learned, even yet, that there was only one thing for them to do with Ingersoll,—leave him entirely alone. Had they done this, they would have been given "the benefit of the doubt," as far as belief in the physical existence of the Devil was concerned; the comparatively few specific remarks on that subject in *Superstition* would not have been multiplied; and all would have remained relatively well. As it transpired, their evasive and shifting criticisms,—their attempt literally to "beat the Devil around the stump,"—so aroused the Great Agnostic's sense of justice and mental honesty as to bring forth one of his most formidable rejoinders. While *Superstition* was comparatively brief, and weaker on any given point than it would have been had its author not been obliged to deal with the many aspects and phases of the subject, his rejoinder, a lecture entitled *The Devil*, was not only comparatively long and exhaustive, but exclusively devoted to a single aspect of superstition. It was first delivered on Sunday February 5th (1899), in New York.

"When I read these answers," said Ingersoll, referring, in the beginning of this lecture, to the

statements of the clergymen concerning his own remarks on the Devil in *Superstition*, "I thought of this line from Heine: 'Christ rode on an ass, but now asses ride on Christ.'" (iv 354)

Ingersoll then reviewed the history of demonology. He showed that all the devils, great and small, like all the gods, were created by mankind; that they were inferred from nature by savages,—sculptured by fear and terror from injurious phenomena. He showed that Christianity obtained its particular devil from the Jews, who brought him from Babylon; that the Old Testament teaches the existence of a real living Devil, not of "a personification of evil"; that, according to this book, the Devil once lived in Heaven, raised a rebellion, and was cast out; that "it is impossible to explain him away without at the same time explaining God away"; that had it not been for the Devil, there would have been no Christ; that, as a matter of fact, "the religion known as 'Christianity' was invented by God himself to repair in part the wreck and ruin that had resulted from the Devil's work." (iv 361)

He declared, that, on the subject of the existence of a real Devil, "the New Testament is far more explicit than the Old." He pointed out, that Christ was tempted in the wilderness and on the mountain, not by "a personification of evil," but by the Devil, who "knew that Christ was God, and knew that Christ knew that the tempter was the

Devil." "If," said Ingersoll, "Christ was not tempted by the Devil, then the temptation was born in his own heart. If that be true, can it be said that he was divine? If these adders, these vipers, were coiled in his bosom, was he the Son of God? Was he pure?" Ingersoll also showed, by the gospels, that not only the writers thereof, but Christ himself, believed in the existence of a real Devil, and of innumerable little devils; that the principal occupation of Christ was the casting out of devils; and that, therefore, if the Devil does not exist, the New Testament is not inspired, the fall of man is a mistake, the atonement is an absurdity, and "Christ was either honestly mistaken, insane or an impostor." (iv 368–93)

Of course, I have recited only a small part of the arguments which the Great Agnostic brought forward on the point concerned; but even these few will suffice to indicate the utter folly of his clerical critics in breaking silence—the consummate ease with which he refuted their assertion, "that all references to the Devil in the Scriptures could be explained on the hypothesis that the Devil thus alluded to was simply a personification of evil," and with what similar ease he defended, at the same time, the thesis laid down in *Superstition*, "that the Christian world could not deny the existence of the Devil, that the Devil was really the keystone of the arch, and that to take him away was to destroy the entire system."

Following as it did within four months the delivery of *Superstition*, this lecture on *The Devil* affords, in its acutely reasoned main text, and in the manner in which it was brought to a close, another typical example, not only of the Great Agnostic's controversial resourcefulness, but of the versatility of his genius.

"What poem was that with which 'the Colonel' closed?" was asked of one of Ingersoll's associates, who had not heard the lecture delivered.

"I do not know," answered the latter, adding, in effect, that he supposed it to be a quotation from one of the poets.

The inquirer replied, in substance, that he did not think so; that the poem consisted of many stanzas; and that they were not from any poet with whom he was familiar. When Ingersoll was seen, soon afterwards, he was asked by the associate about the poem in question. He replied that it was something which he had written that afternoon, before the lecture. It was then recalled that "the Colonel" was writing for a time, in the afternoon, at a desk in the room in which the usual conversation was going on among friends and members of the family. He had written a poem of eighteen stanzas,—108 verses,—entitling it the *Declaration of the Free*. Evidently intended, in the main, as a rebuke for his clerical critics of *Superstition*, it is, to that extent, essentially didactic. Nevertheless, it is by no means destitute of

real poetic quality. Ingersoll preceded its recitation by the sentence, "Let me now give you the declaration of a creed." I quote the first, fifth, fifteenth, and last stanzas:—

"We have no falsehoods to defend—
We want the facts;
Our force, our thought, we do not spend
In vain attacks.
And we will never meanly try
To save some fair and pleasing lie.

* * * * * * *

"We have no master on the land—
No king in air—
Without a manacle we stand,
Without a prayer,
Without a fear of coming night,
We seek the truth, we love the light.

* * * * * * *

"The hands that help are better far
Than lips that pray.
Love is the ever gleaming star
That leads the way,
That shines, not on vague worlds of bliss,
But on a paradise in this.

* * * * * * *

"Is there beyond the silent night
An endless day?
Is death a door that leads to light?
We cannot say.
The tongueless secret locked in fate
We do not know.—We hope and wait." (iv 415)

This was his last poem—in verse.

§ 4.

On June 2d of this year (1899), he delivered before the American Free Religious Association, in the Hollis Street Theater, Boston, an address on *What Is Religion?* many clergymen being comprised in the audience.

To a correct knowledge of his mental tendencies throughout his career as a rationalistic reformer, it is as essential as it is interesting to note that this, his last public utterance on religion, differs from his first, *Progress*, chiefly in being far more radical. Following is its noble and heroic peroration :—

"Religion can never reform mankind, because religion is slavery.

"It is far better to be free, to leave the forts and barricades of fear, to stand erect and face the future with a smile.

"It is far better to give yourself sometimes to negligence, to drift with wave and tide, with the blind force of the world, to think and dream, to forget the chains and limitations of the breathing life, to forget purpose and object, to lounge in the picture-gallery of the brain, to feel once more the clasps and kisses of the past, to bring life's morning back, to see again the forms and faces of the dead, to paint fair pictures for the coming years, to forget all Gods, their promises and threats, to feel within your veins life's joyous stream and hear the martial music, the rhythmic beating of your fearless heart.

"And then to rouse yourself to do all useful things, to reach with thought and deed the ideal in your brain, to give your fancies wing, that they, like chemist bees, may find art's nectar in the weeds of common things, to look with trained and steady eyes for facts, to find the subtle threads that join the distant with the now, to increase knowledge, to take burdens from the weak, to develop the brain, to defend the right, to make a palace for the soul.

"This is real religion. This is real worship." (iv 507)

Nine years before, or on June 23, 1890, in

an interview published in *The Post-Express* of Rochester, N. Y., appeared the following :—

"Question.—If you should write your last sentence on religious topics, what would be your closing?"

"Answer.—I now, in the presence of death, affirm and reaffirm the truth of all that I have said against the superstitions of the world. I would say at least that much on the subject with my last breath." (viii 452)

In conjunction with this and the preceding quotation, the following letter to Clinton J. Robins (Dayton, O.) is of interesting significance, especially if we consider its date :—

"NEW YORK, JULY 13, 1899.

"*C. J. Robins, Esq.*

"DEAR SIR: First accept a thousand thanks for your good letter. The only trouble is that it is too flattering. You are right in thinking that I have not changed. I still believe that all religions are based on falsehoods and mistakes. I still deny the existence of the supernatural, and I still say that real religion is usefulness. Thanking you again, I remain

"Yours always,

"R. G. Ingersoll."

His last public appearance was on June 21st, at Camden, N. J., in an argument before the vice-chancellor of that state, in the case of Russell versus Russell. During this argument, made on behalf of Mrs. Russell, in connection with the disposition of her deceased husband's estate, Ingersoll declared, as he had so often done before, that the love of man for woman, of woman for man, was "the holiest and the most beautiful" thing in

nature—that it had given us "all there is of value in the world."

So, too, his last letter, like his last legal, his last religious, and his last political address, breathes the same sentiments that, with steadfast nobility and heroism, he had voiced throughout his life. The letter, addressed to the editor of the *Clarion* (Mr. William Matlock), Chester, Ill., is as follows:—

"'WALSTON,'
"DOBBS' FERRY-ON-HUDSON,
"JULY 20, '99.

"*Editor Clarion.*

"MY DEAR SIR: I enclose a clipping from your paper. Of course you copied it from some exchange.

"The words attributed to me I never uttered or wrote.

"'I have one sentiment for soldiers;—cheers for the living and tears for the dead.' This is mine—but all the rest is by some one else.

"It is true that I think the treatment of the Filipinos wrong—foolish. It is also true that I do not want the Filipinos if they do not want us. I believe in expansion—if it is honest.

"I want Cuba if the Cubans want us.

"At the same time, I think that our forces should be immediately withdrawn from Cuba, and the people of that island allowed to govern themselves. We waged the war against Spain for liberty—for right—and we must bear the laurel unstained.

"Yours always,
"R. G. INGERSOLL." (xii 286)

Could fate have decreed that the champion of liberty, justice, and humanity should write his last letter on a more fitting theme?

§ 5.

It was pointed out in the beginning of Chapter

VI, that one of the most remarkable exceptions which nature made in the case of Ingersoll was his intellectual vigor and productiveness during "the afternoon of life." These were undiminishingly manifest until November 16, 1896. In the evening of that date, however, while delivering a lecture at Janesville, Wis., he experienced a cerebral hemorrhage. Its immediate effect was wholly subjective, and did not prevent the completion of the discourse. He continued to lecture, on his original itinerary, for a few days, when, at the solicitation of his family, he went to Chicago and consulted Dr. Frank Billings, one of the faculty of the Northwestern University Medical School. Dr. Billings advised him to go home and rest two months, which he did, resuming his lectures on January 24, 1897. About this time, he developed angina pectoris, from which he became an intense sufferer.

For a number of years, he had been in the practice of spending the summer at "Walston," a charming country-seat, which, taking its name from his son-in-law, Mr. Walston H. Brown, is situated on the highlands of the Hudson, a little more than a mile from the village of Dobbs' Ferry. At "Walston," beauty seems omnipresent. To the west, the river lies like a great string of pearls placed by some huge *Wotan* on the breast of a sleeping *Brünnhilde*.

"Surrounded by pleasant fields and faithful friends, by those I have

loved, I hope to end my days. And this I hope may be the lot of all who hear my voice," (i 438)

said Ingersoll in 1877. Was the heart of destiny touched to fulfilment by this tender and generous wish?

During the night of Thursday and Friday July 20th and 21, 1899, at "Walston," Ingersoll had an attack of acute indigestion, sleeping very little, and suffering great pain, which he sought to relieve with nitroglycerine, previously prescribed; but he went to breakfast in the morning, and afterwards sat on the veranda, as he was wont to do, reading and talking with the family.

About ten-thirty he remarked that he would lie down and rest awhile, and would then return and play pool with his son-in-law. Mrs. Ingersoll accompanied her husband up-stairs to their bedroom and remained with him while he slept.

About eleven-forty-five he arose and sat in his chair to put on his shoes. Miss Sue Sharkey, a member of the family, entered the room, followed by Mrs. Ingersoll's sister, Mrs. Sue M. Farrell.

Mrs. Ingersoll said: "Do not dress, Papa, until after luncheon—I will eat up-stairs with you."

He replied: "Oh, no; I do not want to trouble you."

Mrs. Farrell then remarked: "How absurd, after the hundreds of times you have eaten up-stairs with her."

He glanced laughingly at Mrs. Farrell, as she turned to leave the room; and then Mrs. Ingersoll said: "Why, Papa, your tongue is coated—I must give you some medicine."

He looked up at her with a smile and said, "I am better now,"[1] and, as he did so, closed his eyes.

Ingersoll was dead.

The light of a hemisphere was out.

But, companioning that of Shakespeare, another star gleamed in the fadeless galaxy of the immortals.

Since Ingersoll's death,[2] which was caused by angina pectoris, it has been learned that, throughout the two and a half years preceding, he possessed exact knowledge of his physical condition. He had been told by his physicians that he was likely to die at any moment; but, earnestly entreating them to tell no one else, he kept the awful secret from his loved ones. Nor does this alone indicate his concern for their happiness. Although fully realizing that death was ever beside him, he was always very cheerful, and when asked as to his health invariably replied, "All right."

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[1] These were also the last words of his brother Ebon. See page 105.

[2] His wife, her sister (Mrs. Clinton Pinckney Farrell), and Miss Sharkey were the only persons present.

It is remarkable that the death of Robert Ingersoll (due to the same disease as that which caused the death of the other orators Sumner and Phillips) should occur on an anniversary of the death of Robert Burns.

Seven years before the development of the disease that caused his death, he said:—

> "It is a great thing to preach philosophy—far greater to live it. The highest philosophy accepts the inevitable with a smile, and greets it as though it were desired." (iii 299)

As soon as poignant and overwhelming grief would permit, it was decided that the funeral should be private and the extreme of simplicity. Accordingly, at four o'clock in the afternoon of Tuesday July 25th,—a little more than four days after his death,—his family and thirty or forty friends gathered in the room in which he died, and in which the body, without casket or conventional shroud, rested upon a bier,—rested "beneath a wilderness of flowers." These had come, in mute expression of sympathy, boundless admiration, and love, from men and women of all stations, in various parts of America and Europe. And these flowers were to pay, in voiceless fragrance and beauty, the only tribute not born of the once warm heart of the dead himself. For those of the living to whom he had been dearer even than life itself, knew that in his own immortal words, if in any, there was solace,—the only solace that their grief could bear. It was therefore arranged to read three selections from his works. The first, the *Declaration of the Free*, was read by Professor John Clark Ridpath; the second, *My Religion*, by Major Orlando J. Smith; and the third, *A Tribute*

to Ebon C. Ingersoll, by Dr. John Lovejoy Elliott. This constituted the only service or ceremony at "Walston" or elsewhere.

On the morning of Thursday July 27th, it being realized that the last look at the idolized dead could not longer be postponed, the body was borne by loving hands to a hearse, which, followed by five carriages containing the family and friends, proceeded, at eight forty-five, to the railroad-station in Dobbs' Ferry. As the cortège passed through the village, business was suspended and blinds were drawn. Scores of men along the streets removed their hats. At the station, the casket and party were transferred to the funeral car "Kensico" and one coach, both of which (as a special train) Mr. S. R. Calloway, the president of the road, had begged to place at the disposal of the family. At the Grand Central Station, New York, the casket and party were again transferred to hearse and carriages; the cortège proceeding, via the East Twenty-third Street ferry and Greenpoint, Long Island, to the Fresh Pond crematory. The latter was reached at eleven-thirty; and about four in the afternoon the ashes were received in an urn which the family had specially provided, and with which they returned to "Walston."

The urn, resting on a base of porphyry six inches square and two and a half inches deep, is of rich bronze, nineteen inches high, and ovoid in form, the largest diameter near the top. From the

lower face upward and backward over the left side twines a branch of cypress, and around the top on the right side is a sprig of laurel, both in exquisite bas-relief. On the face is engraved:—

L'urne garde
La poussière,
Le cœur
Le souvenir

and on the back:

Robert G. Ingersoll

The urn guards the ashes, the heart the memory, of Robert G. Ingersoll. And so the urn does; and —so does the heart.

CHAPTER X.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION UPON WHICH HE STOOD

BEFORE attempting an estimate of those views the dissemination of which constituted the life-work of Ingersoll, let us carefully and candidly examine the foundation upon which he stood. Let us ascertain, if possible, whether, of frail and flimsy fancy, it rests on the sands of sophistry, or whether, hewn by logic from the granite of intellect, it lies deep and unshakable in the hard-pan of reason.

There have been applied to Ingersoll numerous theological and philosophical epithets and designations. He has been styled a heretic, an unbeliever, a skeptic, a liberal, a rationalist, a materialist, a Freethinker, an infidel, an iconoclast, a disbeliever, an atheist, and an Agnostic. It is essential, to rightful understanding and just appreciation of his opinions and arguments, that we here determine which of these terms, if any, have been applied to him with propriety, and which, if any, with total impropriety, and that we define such of them, in connection with their proper application to him, as are frequently misunderstood.

Now, all who are tolerably familiar alike with the English language and the tendency of Ingersoll's thought will agree that, as concerns Christianity and the other alleged supernatural religions, he was a heretic, an unbeliever, a skeptic, a liberal, and a rationalist, using those words in their generally accepted sense; that he was a materialist, using that word in its generic philosophical sense; and that he was a Freethinker and an infidel, using those words minus, of course, their usual *odium theologicum*.

Leaving the application of the term "iconoclast" to be considered in a later chapter, let us next ascertain whether Ingersoll was a "disbeliever." Briefly, a disbeliever, according to dictionaries and theologians, is one who *refuses* to believe. Of course, it would be just as reasonable to speak of one's refusing to like a certain article of food, for example, as to speak of one's refusing to believe a certain thing. Both belief and unbelief unavoidably result from the consideration of testimony. If in the testimony there is sufficient evidence, the reason accepts, and belief results; if in the testimony there is insufficient evidence, the reason does not accept, and unbelief results. The will is not a factor in the process. In the vocabulary of the really intelligent, there is no such word as "disbeliever," in the theological sense. Ingersoll, therefore, was not a disbeliever.

This brings us to the terms "atheist" and

"Agnostic." Numerous well-meaning individuals, many of them sincere admirers of Ingersoll, have attempted to rescue his memory from the theological abyss of unbelief by saying that he did not deny, that he only failed to believe. They have strongly emphasized the assertion that he was not an atheist, that he was merely an Agnostic. What would they think if they knew that Ingersoll himself declared the *beliefs* of the atheist and the Agnostic to be the same? But let us see for ourselves. A theist is one who believes in the existence of God. An atheist, the opposite of the theist, is one who does not believe in the existence of God. Ingersoll did not believe in the existence of God. Ingersoll was therefore an atheist. "But," you will object, "Ingersoll did not deny." True; but an atheist is not an atheist because he *denies*: he is an atheist because he does not *believe*. The atheist who denies,—and there are such,—may be a worse philosopher, but he is not a better atheist. On the other hand, the atheist who refrains from denying, on the ground that the nature and the limitations of the human mind are such that he has, and can have, no positive evidence on the subject, requires, in fairness, and for the sake of philosophical accuracy, to be distinguished alike from the atheist who does deny, and from the theist who claims to know. Such an atheist was Ingersoll,—"an agnostic-atheist—an atheist because an agnostic."

An adequate knowledge of the intellectual foundation upon which Ingersoll stood involves an understanding of the origin and the more precise meaning and limitations of the latter word. In the first century of our era, there arose in the Roman Empire, simultaneously with what is now called Christianity, several widely different sects whose members claimed to possess knowledge of the being and the providence of God, and of the creation and the destiny of man. Collectively known as Gnostics, they were not mere believers, they were knowers.

In 1869, in England, the Metaphysical Society was formed, with Huxley as a member. Then in his forty-fourth year, he was not only one of the most distinguished of scientists: he was master of nearly everything of value in the realms of history and philosophy. From the cradle, he had been a philosopher. When a mere boy, he had read such works as Guizot's *History of Civilization* and Sir William Hamilton's essay *On the Philosophy of the Unconditioned.* In the fertile fields of thought, he had toiled with all the ardor that youth can know, and though the autumn's mellowing days were yet to come, he already stood among the golden sheaves, and watched the purpling grapes. Withal, and above all, he was mentally veracious—honest with himself and others—absolutely faithful to his ideal of truth. Upon his thoughtful brow, Candor, with firm and fearless hand, had placed a

wreath; and the more Huxley thought, the greener it grew.

The Metaphysical Society numbered among its members many other able and variously distinguished men, including Tennyson, Tyndall, Clifford, Sidgwick, Carpenter, Ruskin, Gladstone, the Duke of Argyll, Harrison, Morley, and Stephen. Like the "secular leagues" and "liberal clubs" of America to-day, it was, as Huxley himself described it, a "confraternity of antagonists." There were theists, pantheists, atheists, idealists of all shades, materialists, Freethinkers, and Christians. Like the Gnostics of old, they were not mere believers, they were knowers.

Huxley, the intellectual chemist, examined one by one the divers specimens which these modern Gnostics placed in the crucible of his brain, and he found that they were all "unknowns." He could not make even a qualitative analysis. That which to the theist or the dogmatic atheist or the idealist was pure gold was, to Huxley, evidently a compound of many inferior elements. Just what those elements were, how united, and in what proportions, he could not say. Far from having revealed any new truth, his analyses, conducted with all the acumen and candor of which he was capable, had developed this solitary fact, that, except his being a Freethinker, he was philosophically unlike every other member of the Metaphysical Society. But he did not become egotistic and vain, and, after the

manner of the Pharisee, give thanks that he was not as other men. Rather did he regret his unlikeness to them—the unique loneliness of his position. Indeed, in at least one respect, he longed to resemble his fellows—to have a name. He saw that, while the minds of those about him were clad in gorgeous robes, the warp and woof of which had been wrought in the loom of theological tradition and metaphysical fancy, he was "without a rag" to cover the nakedness of his candor. And so he became meditative, introspective,—began to contemplate himself and his associates. He perceived that they "had attained a certain 'gnosis,'" and that, consequently, they were his exact opposites, like the Gnostics. He therefore concluded that he was an "Agnostic," and that the application of his principle, or method, in the ascertainment of truth was "Agnosticism." He says:—

"Positively the principle may be expressed: In matters of the intellect, follow your reason as far as it will take you, without regard to any other consideration. And negatively: In matters of the intellect, do not pretend that conclusions are certain which are not demonstrated or demonstrable."[1]

Thus was coined, and thus is defined, Agnosticism,—one of the most useful, one of the most universal, one of the noblest words that ever fell from human lips. Its birth was one of the really important and significant events of the nineteenth

[1] *Science and Christian Tradition. Essays by Thomas H. Huxley.* P. 246.

century. It is one of the milestones on the mental highway. It means honest intelligence—candor wedded to intellect. It represents a great, a sublime principle—a method for avoiding mental mistakes. Says Kant:—

"The greatest and perhaps the sole use of all philosophy of pure reason is, after all, merely negative, since it serves not as an organon for the enlargement [of knowledge], but as a discipline for its delimitation; and, instead of discovering truth, has only the modest merit of preventing error." [1]

But Agnosticism, as is shown by my first quotation, from Huxley, is as positive as it is negative. It represents the psychological state in which one declines, or to be strictly accurate, fails, to assent to, or to assert the truth of, a proposition in the absence of sufficient evidence.

Agnosticism is a Pasteur filter in the great stream of human thought. The filtrate, that is, the clear and sparkling liquid which passes through, is what we believe. The turbid slush, the pathogenic sediment and scum which does not pass through, is what we do not believe: we cast it out. Ingersoll had one of these filters, and in its infinitesimal meshes he found all of the theologies of mankind. But he did not either construct or select the filter: it was given to him before he was born.

Let us now go a little deeper; for we have not

[1] *Kritik der reinen Vernunft.* Edit. Hartenstein, p. 256. Quoted by Huxley in *Science and Christian Tradition*, p. 237. The bracketed phrase is not mine.

quite reached the bed-rock of truth. Having shown how the word Agnosticism came into use, what it means, and something of what it does not mean, let us candidly try to ascertain whether it represents a mental verity,—a principle existing in the immutable necessity of things.

We have what is called the science of metaphysics. It deals with the contents and operations of mind, the so-called metaphysical, in contradistinction to physics, which deals with certain phases of substance and energy,—matter in motion. This sublime science of metaphysics originated far back among those wonderful peoples who gave to us most of our present philosophy and theology, including, of course, Christianity, and to whom we have given the title of "heathen." Many individuals, more especially dogmatic materialistic Freethinkers, are wont to discredit the science; but as Huxley wisely says:—

> "Sound metaphysic is an amulet which renders its possessor proof alike against the poison of superstition and the counter-poison of shallow negation; by showing that the affirmations of the former and the denials of the latter alike deal with matters about which, for lack of evidence, nothing can be either affirmed or denied."[1]

Of course, a comprehensive consideration of the logical relations of the agnostic principle to metaphysics would involve a presentation of the relevant views of nearly all of the great ancient and modern thinkers, including Xenophanes, Heraclitus, An-

[1] *Hume, with Helps to the Study of Berkeley; Essays*, p. 310.

axagoras, Democritus, Protagoras, Aristotle, Parmenides, Pyrrho, Epicurus, Arcesilaus, Bacon, and especially those of Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Kant, Hamilton, Mansel, Comte, Mill, Huxley, Tyndall, and Spencer. But it is hoped that the immeasurably briefer consideration of the relations just mentioned which space here affords will not prove wholly inadequate.

To realize the latter,—to trace the agnostic principle to its origin,—it is necessary that we become oblivious of the physical, or outer, world and enter, for a few moments, the world of mind. Although it may seem egotistic, I shall here write in the first person singular. I shall do this for the sake of simplicity and perspicuity, if not from logical necessity,—rather the latter; for the attentive reader will presently perceive that I could not consistently employ either the second or the third person.

Now, I examine my own mind, and I find that I know two things. First, I know that I exist. How do I know this? Because "I examine." How could I examine if I did not exist? In other words, I am conscious; therefore, I exist—"I think, hence I am."[1] Second, I perceive that my stream of consciousness is subject to continuous interruptions, or changes; and these interruptions, or changes, I call phenomena. Now, these two things,—the perception of my *existence* and the

[1] Descartes, *Discourse on Method.*

perception of *phenomena*,—in other words, these *states of consciousness*, or "psychoses,"[1]—are what I *know*. To put it more briefly still, *I know phenomena*. Above, below, behind these phenomena, I cannot logically and honestly go. Whether the multitudinous divergent phenomena manifest in my subjective consciousness, through the five senses, are mere seemings; whether they represent objective realities, and, if so, whether those realities are different from, or greater or less than, the phenomena themselves, I do not and can not know. Whether the paper on which I write, my limbs, my body, are objective realities, and, if so, whether they are precisely what they seem to be, I do not and can not know. Why can I not know? Because everything concerning them must reach my consciousness through one or more of the senses, and be perceived as phenomena. Hence I am where I started. The circle shows no break. Like Archimedes, my lever is without a fulcrum. What, then, shall be my attitude? Shall I either assent to or deny the assertion of the idealist, that, back of subjective phenomena, there is no objective reality, no material substance? Shall I either assent to or deny the assertion of the dogmatic materialist, that, back of subjective phenomena, there *is* an objective reality, an eternal material substance which is the cause of those phenomena?

[1] A term proposed by Huxley, in *Hume, with Helps to the Study of Berkeley*, foot-note, p. 74.

Shall I either assent to or deny the assertion of the theist, that back of subjective phenomena is God, their "Great First Cause"? What shall be my attitude? "Whoso has mastered the elements of philosophy knows that the attribute of unquestionable certainty appertains only to the existence of a state of consciousness so long as it exists; * * *."[1] "For any demonstration that can be given to the contrary effect, the 'collection of perceptions' which makes up our consciousness may be an orderly phantasmagoria generated by the Ego, unfolding its successive scenes on the background of the abyss of nothingness; as a firework, which is but cunningly arranged combustibles, grows from a spark into a corruscation, and from a corruscation into figures, and words, and cascades of devouring fire, and then vanishes into the darkness of the night.

"On the other hand, it must no less readily be allowed that, for anything that can be proved to the contrary, there may be a real something which is the cause of all our impressions; that sensations, though not likenesses, are symbols of that something; and that the part of that something, which we call the nervous system, is an apparatus for supplying us with a sort of algebra of fact, based on those symbols. A brain may be the machinery by which the material universe becomes conscious of itself."[2] What, then, I ask again, shall be my

[1] Ibid., p. 310.
[2] Ibid., p. 96.

attitude? Shall I either assent to or deny the assertion of the idealist, of the dogmatic materialist, or of the theist? I shall do none of these. I shall say, with Ingersoll, "I do not know."

Now, this one sublime truth, that all we positively know, or can positively know, is phenomena; that the noumena, the things (if any things) back of phenomena, "the things in themselves," the ultimate realities, the "Absolute," or "Unconditioned," are unknown and inscrutable, is the truth which I had in view when, at the beginning of this chapter, I proposed to examine the philosophical foundation upon which Ingersoll stood. It is, I repeat, the one sublime truth; and until it shall have been blotted out, the attitude of the Agnostic, it seems to me, must be recognized as the only tenable attitude of the human mind. Says Ingersoll:—

"Let us be honest with ourselves. In the presence of countless mysteries; standing beneath the boundless heaven sown thick with constellations; knowing that each grain of sand, each leaf, each blade of grass, asks of every mind the answerless question; knowing that the simplest thing defies solution; feeling that we deal with the superficial and the relative, and that we are forever eluded by the real, the absolute,—let us admit the limitations of our minds, and let us have the courage and the candor to say: We do not know." (xi 248)

Anxious to hear at first hand his views on so vital a point, I once asked Ingersoll why he had accepted Agnosticism, instead of either theism or dogmatic atheism. He replied, in effect, that he possessed, as his only guide in this and all other

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From a crayon portrait from life. by Henry Ulke.
Photographed by Harris and Ewing.

matters, a brain capable of certain things: there were limits within which its processes were confined. Under given conditions, it reached given conclusions—we will say beliefs. These beliefs unavoidably resulted from evidence, as that which is called "weight" results from the gravitation of matter placed upon a scale. As far as he could see, his beliefs,—his weights,—were right, but he did not affirm that they were right; for he recognized the fact that, after all, his brain,—his mental scales,—might be wrong. To him, the assertion that an infinitely wise and powerful Being created and governs this world was a monstrous absurdity; but he did not deny, because, as already stated, he realized that the mental scales in which he was obliged to weigh the evidence for and against might be wrong,—might have erroneously tipped to the negative side. And so he never claimed to know the right weight: he simply read the scale. Moreover, he knew that there were millions of other "scales," every one differing from his own, and that, consequently, in spite of themselves, they would all give different weights to the same matter. This is the golden kernel of Ingersollism—every mind its own "sealer of weights and measures." He knew that the theist and the dogmatic atheist alike must, too, have weighed the matter in their scales, and must have reached, unavoidably, their respective conclusions. He did not blame them for their conclusions: he simply demanded that

they, like himself, tell them as conclusions, not as facts.

By many, Agnosticism is looked upon as a sort of philosophical system or anti-theological creed. It is regarded as collectively representing all the ideas and doctrines that are more or less antagonistic to supernaturalism, particularly the supernaturalism of Christendom. Its opponents, evidently unable to cope with it on fair and logical grounds, would confound it with "infidelity" in general, thereby charging it with such weaknesses as they may be pleased to find in the latter. Moreover, they would limit it to the theological field. Of course, nothing could be more unjust and unreasonable. Agnosticism is not infidelity, though it is often practised by persons to whom religionists have applied the epithet "infidel." Nor is Agnosticism either a philosophical system or an anti-theological creed. Indeed, it is no more a system or a creed of any sort than a smelter is a gold-brick, or than a threshing-machine is a loaf of bread; and it is no more limited to theology than gravitation is to apples.

Is it not evident that Agnosticism is simply a principle, which may be either positively or negatively employed? and that it is universally applicable? Is it not true that, in all questions not theological, the theist and the atheist are themselves Agnostics? Will any Christian who happens to be a scientist deny that the practice of

withholding judgment pending the solution of a problem is the very bulwark of modern science? Will anybody say that this is not the Agnosticism of Ingersoll?

Take the very water that we drink. Prior to 1781, most chemists believed it to be composed of one atom of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen to the molecule. Cavendish, however, was not satisfied,—had not reached a conclusion; and not long after the year mentioned, water was shown to consist of two atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen. Therefore, our knowledge of the molecular structure of water is a result of an application of the agnostic principle in the science of chemistry.

Now, the suspension of judgment on the part of Cavendish must have been due to the fact that his knowledge in the particular branch concerned was greater than that of those who believed the composition of water to have been determined. If this means anything, it means that the difference between his (agnostic) attitude and the (theistic) attitude of his contemporaries in chemistry was simply a difference of knowledge. Cavendish knew enough to know that he did not know, and that no one else did.

Again, if a layman possessing a smattering of bacteriology should enter the laboratory of some justly renowned bacteriologist, and positively but candidly assert that there is no such thing as an infectious disease, and that, moreover, bacteria are

invariably a blessing to mankind, and thereupon the bacteriologist should disagree with his visitor, the disagreement would surely be due to a difference of knowledge. Similar examples might be drawn from every other science.

Let us go further. What is the source of the Agnosticism manifested in matters about which nothing is known by anybody? It cannot be a difference of knowledge; for there is no knowledge. If one person declares that the center of the earth is a huge diamond, and another declines, from lack of knowledge on the subject, either to affirm or to deny the assertion, what causes the disagreement? What is the source of the Agnosticism manifested by the person who declines either to affirm or to deny? There can be but one answer to this question. It is candor—"the courage of the soul."

Some will claim that this application of the principle of Agnosticism is unjust; that the question chosen is not analogous to the one over which the Great Agnostic waged so many battles. Can such an objection be sustained? Is the alleged evidence of the theist, in support of the supernatural, superior to that which might be deduced to prove that a huge diamond lies where gravitation is naught? With his crucible for a weapon, the scientist has driven from the field the followers of the "Great First Cause," and has blotted from every language the words "create" and "anni-

hilate." Extending to the stars his inquiring gaze, he has found no "New Jerusalem"; and from that mystic realm in which all roads converge is still to come the first authentic word. We have no evidence. We may hope; but on this question of questions, the savage is the equal of the sage. Perhaps nothing else illustrates this better than the following story, which Ingersoll himself used to tell in his inimitable way:

A missionary was trying to convince an Indian of the wonderful truths of Christianity. The red man listened attentively, then stooped and, with a stick, drew a little circle in the sand. "This," said he, "is what Indian knows." Then, tracing a very large circle around the first, he added, "and this is what white man knows; but out here [pointing outside both circles] Indian knows just as much as white man."

But while Ingersoll kept constantly in mind the vast difference between knowledge and belief,—while he was ever faithful to the ethical and intellectual agnostic principle, "that it is wrong for a man to say that he is certain of the objective truth of any proposition unless he can produce evidence which logically justifies that certainty,"[1] he believed a great many things. It is with his belief on the subject of a Creator, that we are next concerned.

[1] Huxley, *Science and Christian Tradition*, p. 310.

Satisfied with nothing that did not rest upon the bed-rock of reason, Ingersoll attacked the problem chiefly from two standpoints, the scientific and the philosophical. Starting with the scientifically demonstrated truths embraced in "the law of substance" and "the law of the conservation of energy," namely, that not the minutest imaginable atom of matter, nor the least of the total sum of force, or energy, can be annihilated, he reached the conclusion that neither could have been created, and that, therefore, both must have always existed, and will forever continue to exist. Or, to state the same facts in a different way: As there can be no force without matter, no matter without force,—the two whenever and wherever cognizant to the mind being inseparable,—the idea of a creator is an absurdity. Because, a being who could create must have derived from matter his energy to create, in which case he was not a creator. To put it even more plainly: If he had energy, he was inseparable from matter—was matter, or a phase of matter—and could not have created matter, that is, could not have created himself. It is here that Deism and Theism, with their "First Cause," or "Creator," meet their "Waterloo" on the battlefield of science.

Just as great a difficulty—precisely the same difficulty, in reality—is encountered when the problem is approached from a purely philosophical standpoint. For (according to the theist himself)

nothing uncaused ever existed. Now, a first cause, if it occurred, was uncaused, which is a contradiction, and therefore absurd. Further, before we can logically speak of a First (uncaused) Cause, we must trace somewhere in the universe a last effect—a "Great Last Effect." Let us, as a test, apply this reasoning to some everyday phenomenon. Suppose that a child is suffering from an incurable congenital disease which has produced certain structural changes in the brain or other part of the nervous system. These changes will surely give rise to symptoms,—will cause the conduct of the individual to deviate from what is called "normal." Imagine, now, that some theistic sociologist, eager to establish the falsity of Ingersoll's position, is to undertake a conception of the last effect that the lesion in the nervous system of this child will have upon society! Would he not press the snow-line of common sense? And yet theologians, lawyers, statesmen, scientists, physicians (who, above all, should be wiser), babble about a First Cause as glibly as a merchant gossips over a commodity.

The cardinal conclusion to which Ingersoll was forced by these scientific and philosophical truths was, of course, that neither the God of the Bible, nor of any other so-called sacred book, created the universe. And this conclusion he urged. In the place of the theological view, he put the mechanical, or monistic. To him, the universe, of which

we ourselves are a part, was one eternal and, so far as can be known, planless and purposeless machine, which, by virtue of its composition, could not be otherwise than as it is; every part, from atom to planet, obeying the law of necessity, without the possibility of miracle, chance, or accident. In this sublime yet awful mechanism, the sum of matter and energy must remain forever the same, though forms change and manifestations vary. A heap of coal might be converted into heat, the heat into steam, the steam into motion, the motion arrested and changed back to heat, and so forth; but the totality of matter and energy would not be affected. A molecule of iron, liberated by chemical action from one of its chlorides, entering the blood, and uniting with the coloring matter (hemoglobin) of the red blood-cells, might so modify the force of thought as to assist in the production of a grander poem. In such a case, the total amount of chloride of iron would be lessened, but the total amounts of iron and chlorine would remain the same. And this same iron, centuries after the poet's death, might be gathered up by the roots of plants, to course again through human veins.

That intellects capable of a universal view should adopt the monistic theory of the universe, could excite no wonder in a mind like Ingersoll's. Rather did the wonder lie in the spectacle of thinking men and women, in this age of thought and scientific generalization, attempting to displace infinite neces-

sity, "the mother of the world,"[1] by that which, examined in the light of pure reason, is, at best, only a useless and superfluous conception. In other words, the belief that behind the totality of objective sensations which we call the universe lies no independent power, was not wonderful, nor even "radical." But the opposite belief, that the universe, in which substance and energy are inseparable and eternal; in which not the mentally highest and morally best, but the physically fittest, survives —the ignorant and vicious often triumphing over the intellectual and innocent; in which, from the astronomical to the microscopical,—from wheeling Neptune to bacterial spore,—Necessity reigns omnipotent, is the sport and prey of some capricious, immaterial nothing—this, to Ingersoll, was the real cause for wonder.

From the preceding, it of course follows, that, contrary to his superficial theological critics, Ingersoll did not and could not entertain even the faintest idea of "accident," or "chance," in relation to universal phenomena. Such an idea can be held by those only who fail to recognize the unity of things. Ingersoll believed that the universe is the one infinite and eternal fact, and he could not, therefore, believe that it had ever been, or would be, the subject of "accident," or "chance," or "happening." He knew that nothing can "happen"

[1] "Necessity! thou mother of the world!" Shelley, *Queen Mab*, and notes to.

to *one*. He knew that all such terms imply plurality. "Accidents" and "happenings" occur with reference to two or more, but never with reference to one.

The simple and logical truth of the matter is, that the charge of postulating the accidental with reference to cosmogonic processes is justly to be laid, not at Ingersoll's door, but at the door of his theological critics. Chance and accident are implied, not by belief in the infinite and eternal existence and persistence of substance and energy, but by such words as "creation" and "annihilation." Indeed, to believe in the possibility of the phenomena which these words indicate, is to believe in chance and accident, and in nothing else. He who believes in substance and energy, believes in necessity; he who believes in creation, believes in caprice: necessity means order; caprice, accident.

Perhaps nothing else more clearly demonstrates Ingersoll's philosophic grasp and insight, than his conception of natural law. In that conception, he did what most of his critics, and even many scientific writers, fail to do: he distinguished law from cause. He recognized, with the clarity of a technical scientist, that a deduction based upon an observation of a phenomenon is one thing; the cause of the phenomenon, quite another. As to a given phenomenon, he knew that the cause was behind, and that the law, with its human creator, was in front. He knew that he himself, like this creator,

was limited to the observation of only this side of the phenomenon, and that even should he ascertain the cause, the cause of that cause would logically demand an explanation. Confronted with these insuperable difficulties, he did not seek relief in a vain confusion of terms. He did not confound a man-made law,—that is, a mental perception of phenomenal sequence,—with its cause, and announce that he had discovered God. He did not build him a philosophical palace of "fool's gold" mined in a muddled brain. He chose to stand modestly and candidly in the open light of reason. He said:—

"Let it be understood that by the term Law is meant the same invariable relations of succession and resemblance predicated of all facts springing from like conditions. Law is a fact—not a cause. It is a fact, that like conditions produce like results: this fact is Law. When we say that the universe is governed by law, we mean that this fact, called law, is incapable of change; that it is, has been, and forever will be, the same inexorable, immutable Fact, inseparable from all phenomena. Law, in this sense, was not enacted or made. It could not have been otherwise than as it is. That which necessarily exists has no creator." (i 108) [1]

And yet writers and speakers of the dualistic theological school,—the critics of Ingersoll,—constantly use the term "natural law" as though the latter were an entity, a force, a cause of phenomena. Evidently their conception of natural law differs

[1] Notwithstanding this paragraph, taken from the Humboldt lecture of 1869, a casuistic critic, in 1883, fourteen years later, charged Ingersoll with entertaining a misconception of natural law!

in no essential respect from their conception of civil law. Frequently are they chargeable with such expressions as: "Evolution unfolds itself in regular order, in obedience to natural laws"; "The law of gravity holds the planets in their orbits," and so forth.

The truth is, that nothing occurs in nature because of, or in obedience to, law. Evolution *obeys* no law or laws. If it *obeys* "natural laws" now, what did it obey before there were any natural laws? and what would it obey if those laws should be forgotten? All we can truthfully say is, that evolution is a universal and orderly phenomenon of what we call substance and energy. Its cause or causes are within, behind, or beneath the latter; its laws are in the human mind, and on paper. As to the next proposition, if "the law of gravity holds the planets in their orbits," what held them before Newton's time? What held him to the earth while he was discovering that law? It would be a safe wager, that the law of gravity could not "hold" a mustard-seed.

"But what about this confusion of ideas and terms?—what harm is done by confounding natural law with cause?" will be asked. In the consideration of the ultimate world-problems, with which Ingersoll dealt, the greatest harm, I reply. It misleads the uninformed and uncritical. It contributes to the dissemination of pseudo-science, and, therethrough, to the predominance of pseudo-

philosophy. It tends to denial of the integrity of nature, thereby affording standing-room for the supernatural. How? In this way: Socialized individuals are accustomed to obeying civil law. To the extent that they obey unwillingly, they come to regard law as force. The less intelligent they are, the more will they so regard it. Furthermore, these individuals know that laws have not always existed; that they have had makers, creators. Now, if we use the term law in the sense of force, or cause,—if, for example, we speak of a falling stone's obeying the law of gravity, as a person obeys a law of the state,—we establish in the mind of the uncritical, through the inevitable association of ideas, the necessity for a creator of the law which the stone is said to obey; because it is unthinkable that a law, in the usual sense, could create itself. No other thinker understood this more clearly than Ingersoll.

Convinced by his earnest studies in physical science, and by careful observation of sociological phenomena, that the scientific, or monistic, conception of nature, already mentioned, is the only tenable one, and possessing that mental poise which enables one to view things, not as pictured by the sentiments, but as they really are, Ingersoll naturally and necessarily spurned every idea that savored of "design" or of "special providence." He saw that these are fancies of which only the provincial mind is capable. To him, the teleo-

logical view was, at best, a sort of mental emetic. His intellectual horizon was too broad for the sort of special providence that, for example, acknowledged the necessity of raising up a Lincoln who should break the fetters of an enslaved race, while a nation's soil ran red with innocent blood, and who should then, untimely, find a martyr's grave, through the medium of an assassin's bullet. Ingersoll could see no reason for having permitted the race to be enslaved in the first place.

He read with scorn and pity the various "Christian evidences," the "fundamental truths," the "analogies." Examining Paley's wonderful "watch," he found that it did not keep time with the logic of this age, and that it afforded no greater degree of conviction than Aladdin's wonderful lamp. He possessed, to a rare degree, the faculty of universal sight. Recognizing the law of correlatives, a knowledge of a part implied, with him, a knowledge of the whole; and, as he saw that the human mind is limited, he knew that to assert design for any thing or phenomenon in nature is illogical. He knew that we must understand causes and effects—children of necessity—before asserting purpose. This rule had been applied in every other branch of human effort, where perfection is not claimed; and he applied it in theology, where perfection is claimed.

Of course, the "evidences" of "design" were as apparent to Ingersoll as to any one else; that is,

they were superficially apparent. They never took him farther on the turnpike of teleology than where the path of Agnosticism branches off. He said :—

"In nature I see, or seem to see, good and evil—intelligence and ignorance—goodness and cruelty—care and carelessness—economy and waste. I see means that do not accomplish the ends—designs that seem to fail." (iv 55)

For example, although recognizing apparent design, as far as the welfare of the microbe itself is concerned, he could not believe that any wise and beneficent purpose is subserved by the bacterium which thrives in dust and soil, and, fortuitously entering the tissues of man, or of some lower mammal, causes the horrible disease called "lockjaw." Considering all the known facts regarding this micro-organism, he could not think otherwise than that the part played by it is, to say the least, a most useless one. But he would not attempt to account for the existence of this germ. He was satisfied that, like all other things, it necessarily exists—that it is—and that the deplorable phenomena which it excites are, for want of a better word, accidental.

He understood, as only minds of the widest range and keenest insight can understand, that the forces of nature are everywhere immutable, inexorable, implacable. In him were combined, as in very few, the grasp and penetration of the physical scientist, and the instinct of the poet.

He was therefore able to realize the utter helplessness, the insignificance, the nothingness, of man in the midst of an infinite environment that has neither malice to gratify nor mercy to bestow. He felt the pathos of human existence. Of this, nothing could make us more certain than the following:—

"A heart breaks, a man dies, a leaf falls in the far forest, a babe is born, and the great world sweeps on." (xii 449)

It would be difficult to find in literature a more tragically pathetic line.

Upon whatever of nature's phenomena Ingersoll looked, whatever of them he contemplated, he intuitively saw how little she does with reference to man. He saw that whatever brings woe to one, brings weal to another,—and that it brings both without intention. He knew that the ocean tempest, in whitecapped horror raging,—lashing with implacable fury the helpless ship on reef and rock, —strewing the pallid corpses on the shore,—might also hasten to a mother's arms her long-lost child, and that somewhere, its fury spent, it would repentant grow, and soothe with cool and fragrant breath the invalid's fevered brow.

Scientist and poet, he knew that the electric force invariably takes the easiest way, whether it fires the only shelter of the noblest and the best, and leaves lifeless and charred the forms of wife and babe, or whether, freighted with love, it flashes through

vague, mysterious depths,—through wrecks of vessels manned by fleshless crews,—over craters whose fiery hearts long since were quenched,—across the sightless valleys where frondage waves without a flower through all the ceaseless years,—onward still, to thrill some distant soul with joy.

Not the most entrancing feature of nature's endless panorama could make him forget, that, notwithstanding the blessings which we experience,—the few fleet moments when Joy, with rosy lips, defying, mocks at Fate,—this life is a heartless maelstrom in which millions of mankind are caught. When he saw the dawn,—saw the somber granite bastile of the east, trembling, change to rubied gold and topple down,—saw the sun, the unprisoned god, walk scornful the fallen ruins into a palace with sapphire domed and with diamonds strewn,—he thought of what had just occurred on the other side of the globe. He was not content to know that this sun had come to weave for another day a robe of verdure for the fields and hills; to vie with its old companion in building fairy forms where babbling brooks are canopied with leaves, nor yet to gild the billowy seas, and weight with red the bending boughs, for Autumn's tawny arms. He knew that it had just furnished light for man to murder hundreds of his fellows; that its chemic rays had just distilled countless gallons of poison for the destruction of mankind; that every step of its glorious march had crushed the

life from millions of animal and vegetable forms; and that, in the Orient, it had been shooting its arrows of thirsting fire into waterless wells beside which Famine sat with hollow cheeks and vacant eyes.

Thus convinced of the relativity of everything in nature, Ingersoll naturally believed that there is nothing absolutely good, nothing absolutely bad, and that, outside the planless, ever-changing cycle of the universe, there is no watchful power to curse or bless mankind. He held that man's ideas of good and evil had been inferred from natural phenomena; those things tending to happiness being called good; those to unhappiness, bad. He once illustrated this phase of his belief, and especially the egotism of man, with the following fable:—

> "A colony of red ants lived at the foot of the Alps. It happened one day that an avalanche destroyed the hill; and one of the ants was heard to remark: 'Who could have taken so much trouble to destroy our home?'" (iii 287)

Ingersoll was wise enough to see that nature neither rejoices nor regrets, and that the so-called rewards and punishments which she bestows and inflicts are but ephemeral phases of the eternal panorama of antecedents and consequents.

I once visited a home in which the husband and father had died of an acute illness. He lay in a room adjoining that in which I stood, the door between the two being closed. It was a summer

morning; and the sun streamed through a window and fell against the closed door, imparting, as it passed, a fairer gold to the careless locks of a little girl, who thought her papa "asleep." I recalled these words of Ingersoll: "The sun shines as gladly on coffins as on cradles."

Unlike his two distinguished predecessors, Voltaire and Paine, Ingersoll was not, in the strictest sense, a pioneer in the struggle for intellectual freedom. In justice to him, however, it should be remembered that, although he came at a later date, and consequently possessed better tools with which to do his work, his opportunities were not so great.

In addition to the influence exerted by the reformers mentioned, and by such thinkers and writers as Buckle, Draper, Lecky, Büchner, and Spencer, modern physical science was, at the beginning of Ingersoll's anti-theological crusade, rapidly becoming the handmaid of rationalism. The great masters,—the real Titans and Hercules,—were hurling thunderbolts of truth at all the monsters of superstition.

One of the most splendid achievements was that of Rudolph Virchow, who, in 1858, published his cellular pathology, placing our knowledge of morbid processes upon a firm scientific basis, demonstrating that disease is as natural as health, and removing it forever from the domain of the supernatural. The ample significance of this discovery can be better realized in no other way than by re-

calling, that, for more than six hundred years of Christian darkness, mental disease was believed to be the work of evil spirits. I need not here draw upon the sad annals of mental therapeutics.

In 1859 Charles Darwin, "the Newton of organic science," after whom Ingersoll himself declared that the last century should be named, established the theory of descent, relegating forever to the ignorant past all "special creation" myths.

Next came Kirchoff and Bunsen, who began, in 1860, a series of investigations which was to demonstrate, by spectral analysis, through millions upon millions of miles of space, the existence in all other planets of the same chemical elements that are found in our earth and its atmosphere.

Three years later Huxley, "Darwin's Bulldog," declared unmistakably, in *Man's Place in Nature*, his opinion that man descended from the apes. Huxley supported his beliefs by most important biological facts.

Tyndall also—he of the "prayer-gauge," which demonstrated alike the credulity of Christendom and the immutability of natural laws—was busy; for he crowned with a master hand, in his *Heat Considered as a Mode of Motion* (1863), the splendid work of Mayer, Joule, Thomson, Helmholtz, and others, by presenting in popular form "the law of the conservation of energy."

Thoroughly familiar with these great scientific achievements; profound in history, and a master

of literature; with personal and political experience that had not tended to increase his affection for orthodoxy; and with his mind still alive to the vivid impressions of the struggle for physical freedom, Robert G. Ingersoll,—"like an armed warrior, like a plumed knight,"—entered the mental lists and shook "his shining lance" at the enemies of intellectual liberty.

CHAPTER XI.

DID HE ATTACK 'THE THEOLOGY OF FIFTY YEARS AGO'? OR DID HE ATTACK THE CHRISTIANITY OF HIS TIME?

A CRITICISM very frequently heard from those who seem to have in view the double object of belittling Ingersoll's work and strengthening their own position is, that he showed no familiarity with the achievements of modern biblical scholarship,—the so-called "higher criticism,"—and that, consequently, it was not the real Christianity of his day which he opposed, but rather, the Christianity, or theology, 'of fifty years ago.' And this assertion is made in spite of the fact that much of his time was devoted to rescuing the character and teachings of "the man Christ" from the aspersions of theology. It is interesting to note, however, that the criticism mentioned was rarely urged while Ingersoll lived. And it is very hard to resist the temptation of inquiring why, if said criticism be just, such distinguished Christian controversialists as Judge Black, Dr. Field, Cardinal Manning, and Mr. Gladstone felt called upon to enter the arena against him. Or were they,

too, blind to the results of the higher criticism, and therefore unable to recognize that the Great Agnostic did not come legitimately within their range? And if the arguments which they sought to meet were not directed against the Christian religion proper, is it not logical to expect the Christian critics to disclaim, as foreign to their system, all that Ingersoll opposed, and to cling only to so much thereof as he did not oppose? Is the Christian world ready to take this step?

Assuming, however, that there is reason for questioning Ingersoll's attitude toward the genuine Christian doctrines, let us carefully consider some of his arguments in the premises. To insure perfect clearness, we will begin with what is believed to be not only a basic, but an absolutely indispensable, quotation from the Great Agnostic himself:—

"Among the evangelical churches there is a substantial agreement upon what they consider the fundamental truths of the gospel. These fundamental truths, as I understand them, are:

"That there is a personal God, the creator of the material universe; that he made man of the dust, and woman from part of the man; that the man and woman were tempted by the devil; that they were turned out of the Garden of Eden; that, about fifteen hundred years afterward, God's patience having been exhausted by the wickedness of mankind, he drowned his children with the exception of eight persons; that afterward he selected from their descendants Abraham, and through him the Jewish people; that he gave laws to these people, and tried to govern them in all things; that he made known his will in many ways; that he wrought a vast number of miracles; that he inspired men to write the Bible; that, in the fullness of time, it having been found impossible to reform mankind, this God came upon earth as a child born of the Virgin Mary; that he lived in

Palestine; that he preached for about three years, going from place to place, occasionally raising the dead, curing the blind and the halt; that he was crucified—for the crime of blasphemy, as the Jews supposed, but that, as a matter of fact, he was offered as a sacrifice for the sins of all who might have faith in him; that he was raised from the dead and ascended into heaven, where he now is, making intercession for his followers; that he will forgive the sins of all who believe on him, and that those who do not believe will be consigned to the dungeons of eternal pain. These—it may be with the addition of the sacraments of Baptism and the Last Supper—constitute what is generally known as the Christian religion." (vi 4)

To demonstrate by quotations from Ingersoll, or otherwise, that he produced exhaustive arguments in refutation of each of the so-called "fundamental truths" of Christianity would be not merely spacially impossible, but unnecessary. It would be unnecessary for the reason that, if he refuted the first of these "truths," he refuted, at least by logical implication, not only all the rest, but all those of every other religion, natural or supernatural. I shall therefore present his views of such only of the "truths" in question as are universally conceded to be indispensable to the Christian religion.

Now, although I have previously indicated that he produced the arguments of a scientist and philosopher to prove that both substance and energy are from and to eternity, and that, therefore, no First Cause, or Creator,—no God of the Bible,—ever existed, it will be well, I think, to quote, just here, his own words on this basic point. He says:—

"If we have a theory, we must have facts for the foundation. We must have corner-stones. We must not build on guesses, fancies, analogies or inferences. The structure must have a basement. If we build, we must begin at the bottom.

"I have a theory and I have four corner-stones.

"The first stone is that matter—substance—cannot be destroyed, cannot be annihilated.

"The second stone is that force cannot be destroyed, cannot be annihilated.

"The third stone is that matter and force cannot exist apart—no matter without force—no force without matter.

"The fourth stone is that that which cannot be destroyed could not have been created; that the indestructible is the uncreatable.

"If these corner-stones are facts, it follows as a necessity that matter and force are from and to eternity; that they can neither be increased nor diminished.

"It follows that nothing has been or can be created; that there never has been or can be a creator." (iv 497)

And in the following collated paragraphs, Ingersoll objects to the Christian conception of God as a personality:—

"This God must be, if he exists, a person—a conscious being." (iv 60) "As a matter of fact, it is impossible for a man to conceive of a personal God, other than as a being having the human form. No one can think of an infinite being having the form of a horse, or of a bird, or of any animal beneath man. It is one of the necessities of the mind to associate forms with intellectual capacities. The highest form of which we have any conception is man's, and consequently, his is the only form that we can find in imagination to give to a personal God, because all other forms are, in our minds, connected with lower intelligences.

"It is impossible to think of a personal God as a spirit without form. We can use these words, but they do not convey to the mind any real and tangible meaning. Every one who thinks of a personal God at all, thinks of him as having the human form. Take from God the idea of form; speak of him simply as an all-pervading spirit—which means an all-pervading something about which we know nothing—and Pantheism is the result." (ii 94)

"Is it possible for the human mind to conceive of an infinite personality? Can it imagine a beginningless being, infinitely powerful and intelligent? If such a being existed, then there must have been an eternity during which nothing did exist except this being; because, if the Universe was created, there must have been a time when it was not, and back of that there must have been an eternity during which nothing but an infinite personality existed. Is it possible to imagine an infinite intelligence dwelling for an eternity in infinite nothing? How could such a being be intelligent? What was there to be intelligent about? There was but one thing to know, namely, that there was nothing except this being. How could such a being be powerful? There was nothing to exercise force upon. There was nothing in the universe to suggest an idea. Relations could not exist—except the relation between infinite intelligence and infinite nothing." (xi 239)

As before stated, it of course follows, by logical implication, that, in endeavoring to prove that belief in the God of the Bible is untenable, Ingersoll endeavored to prove that the Christian belief in the "special creation" of man is untenable; but as I am anxious to show that he left nothing to inference; that he took no chances with the illogic and the inconsistency of mankind; that, indeed, there was no solitary point upon the enemy's battle-ground at which he failed to plant a mine or drop a shell, I shall give, in his own words, his views concerning the origin of man—views which, expressed with characteristic earnestness in his earliest lectures, were set forth with even deeper conviction in his very last.

In describing his mental evolution; in presenting us with a panorama of his upward journey, from the orthodox quagmire of his youthful envi-

ronment, to the "skyish head" of Olympian reason, from which he viewed the superstitions of mankind, he said:—

"Then I studied biology—not much—just enough to know something of animal forms, enough to know that life existed when the Laurentian rocks were made—just enough to know that implements of stone, implements that had been formed by human hands, had been found mingled with the bones of extinct animals, bones that had been split with these implements, and that these animals had ceased to exist hundreds of thousands of years before the manufacture of Adam and Eve." (iv 34)

After thus showing that neither the purely biblical, nor any theological, account of man's "special creation" can by any possibility whatsoever be accepted as chronologically true, he presents the scientific explanation of our origin; and he marshals his facts as a general marshals his battalions:—

"If matter and force are from eternity, then we can say that man had no intelligent creator, that man was not a special creation.

"We now know, if we know anything, that Jehovah, the divine potter, did not mix and mould clay into the forms of men and women, and then breathe the breath of life into these forms.

"We now know that our first parents were not foreigners. We know that they were natives of this world, produced here, and that their life did not come from the breath of any God. We now know, if we know anything, that the universe is natural, and that men and women have been naturally produced. We now know our ancestors, our pedigree. We have the family tree.

"We have all the links of the chain, twenty-six links inclusive from moner to man.

"We did not get our information from inspired books. We have fossil facts and living forms.

"From the simplest creatures, from blind sensation, from [an]

organism, from [with] one vague want, to a single cell with a nucleus, to a hollow ball filled with fluid, to a cup with double walls, to a flat worm, to a something that begins to breathe, to an organism that has a spinal chord, to a link between the invertebrate to [and] the vertebrate, to one that has a cranium—a house for a brain—to one with fins, still onward to one with fore and hinder fins, to the reptile [reptilia, to the] mammalia, to the marsupials, to the lemures, dwellers in trees, to the simiae, to the pithecanthropi, and lastly, to man." (iv 500)

The next of the alleged "fundamental truths" which is sufficiently important to require attention here is, that Jehovah wrought a vast number of miracles. Following Ingersoll's arguments for the eternal and inexorable persistence of substance and energy, an elaborate demonstration of the fact that he sought to prove that all miracles are impossible would be a work of supererogation. I shall therefore introduce only a few of his own specific views of the subject:—

"Jehovah, according to the Scriptures, wrought hundreds of miracles for the benefit of the Jews." (ii 451) "Mr. Locke was in the habit of saying: 'Define your terms.' So the first question is, What is a miracle." (viii 507)? "An act performed by a master of nature without reference to the facts in nature. This is the only honest definition of a miracle.

"If a man could make a perfect circle, the diameter of which was exactly one-half the circumference, that would be a miracle in geometry. If a man could make twice four, nine, that would be a miracle in mathematics. If a man could make a stone, falling in the air, pass through a space of ten feet the first second, twenty-five feet the second second, and five feet the third second, that would be a miracle in physics. If a man could put together hydrogen, oxygen and nitrogen and produce pure gold, that would be a miracle in chemistry. * * * To make a square triangle would be a most wonderful miracle. To cause a mirror to reflect the faces of persons who stand behind it, instead

of those who stand in front, would be a miracle. To make echo answer a question would be a miracle. In other words, to do anything contrary to or without regard to the facts in nature is to perform a miracle." (iv 305)

Having thus given what he believes to be "the only honest definition of a miracle," and having cited several phenomena the production of which would constitute miracles, he proceeds, with the weapons of science and logic, to demonstrate their impossibility. He says:—

"Now we are convinced of what is called the 'uniformity of nature.' We believe that all things act and are acted upon in accordance with their nature; that under like conditions the results will always be substantially the same; that like ever has and ever will produce like. We now believe that events have natural parents and that none die childless." (iv 306) "Science asserts the absolute, the unvarying uniformity of nature." (ii 459)

"If, again, we take the ground of some of the more advanced clergy, that a miracle is in accordance with the facts in nature, but with facts unknown to man, then we are compelled to say that a miracle is performed by a divine sleight-of-hand; as, for instance, that our senses are deceived; or, that it is perfectly simple to this higher intelligence, while inexplicable to us. If we give this explanation, then man has been imposed upon by a superior intelligence. It is as though one acquainted with the sciences—with the action of electricity—should excite the wonder of savages by sending messages to his partner. The savage would say, 'A miracle;' but the one who sent the message would say, 'There is no miracle; it is in accordance with facts in nature unknown to you.' So that, after all, the word miracle grows in the soil of ignorance." (viii 507)

"Miracles are not simply impossible, but they are unthinkable by any man capable of thinking.

"Now an intelligent man cannot believe that a miracle ever was, or ever will be, performed." (iv 306)

My next task is to show how, if at all, Ingersoll

dealt with the assertion, that "God came upon earth as a child born of the Virgin Mary." Probably all Christians, except a small handful of Christian Scientists and Unitarians (the latter having been said, by Fawcett, to represent "one of the drollest of compromises between Christianity and Agnosticism"), will admit that a belief in Jesus Christ, as the divine Son of God, is essential to Christianity. Indeed, it is inconceivable that any one outside the Christian Science and Unitarian churches should deny that the miracles of the birth, life, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Christ are the very foundations of the Christian edifice, and that to put underneath them the dynamite of denial is to leave Christendom to struggle and perish in a heap of theological ruin.

Now, it is not even remotely suspected that the average person who has read Ingersoll's arguments in opposition to the theory of a First Cause, Creator, or God of the Bible, will consider it possible that the Great Agnostic believed in a Son of God,—a Jesus Christ,—in the true supernatural sense. But as there may be readers who are not familiar with Ingersoll's views of Christ, and as it is of the utmost importance that nothing be left to inference, I shall here present, verbatim, some of those views. Of the birth of Christ, he says:—

"I cannot believe in the miraculous origin of Jesus Christ. I believe he was the son of Joseph and Mary; that Joseph and Mary had been duly and legally married; that he was the legitimate offspring

of that union. Nobody ever believed the contrary until he had been dead at least one hundred and fifty years." (ii 390) "In order to place themselves on an equality with Pagans they started the claim of divinity, and also took the second step requisite in that country: First, a god for his father, and second, a virgin for his mother. This was the Pagan combination of greatness, and the Christians added to this that Christ was God." (xi 296) "Neither Matthew, Mark, nor Luke ever dreamed that he was of divine origin. He did not say to either Matthew, Mark, or Luke, or to any one in their hearing, that he was the Son of God, or that he was miraculously conceived. He did not say it. It may be asserted that he said it to John, but John did not write the gospel that bears his name. The angel Gabriel, who, they say, brought the news, never wrote a word upon the subject. The mother of Christ never wrote a word upon the subject. His alleged father never wrote a word upon the subject, and Joseph never admitted the story. We are lacking in the matter of witnesses. * * *

"At that time Matthew and Luke believed that Christ was the son of Joseph and Mary. And why? They say he descended from David, and in order to show that he was of the blood of David, they gave the genealogy of Joseph. And if Joseph was not his father, why did they not give the genealogy of Pontius Pilate or of Herod? Could they, by giving the genealogy of Joseph, show that he was of the blood of David if Joseph was in no way related to Christ? And yet that is the position into which the Christian world is driven." (ii 390)

And elsewhere, after pointing out that Apollo, Baldur, Chrishna, Hercules, Samson, Osiris, Bacchus, Zoroaster, Lao-tsze, and many other gods of mythological and religious history were sun-gods; that they all "had gods for fathers," and virgins for mothers; that "the births of nearly all were announced by stars," and "celebrated by celestial music"; that all "were born at the winter solstice —on Christmas"—"in humble places—in caves, under trees, in common inns"; that "tyrants sought to kill them all when they were babes";

that "nearly all were worshiped by 'wise men'"; that "all of them fasted for forty days—all of them taught in parables—all of them wrought miracles—all met with a violent death, and all rose from the dead," he declares:—

"The history of these gods is the history of our Christ.

"This is not a coincident—an accident. Christ was a sun-god. Christ was a new name for an old biography—a survival—the last of the sun-gods. Christ was not a man but a myth—not a life but a legend."

And he also declared:—

"There is not, in all the contemporaneous literature of the world, a single word about Christ or his apostles. The paragraph in Josephus is admitted to be an interpolation, and the letters, the account of the trial, and several other documents forged by the zeal of the early fathers, are now admitted to be false." (vi 85)

And he asks, in a tone that brings an affirming answer:—

"Is it not wonderful that Josephus, the best historian the Hebrews produced, says nothing about the life or death of Christ * * * ?"[1] (vi 84)

Having shown that Ingersoll denied not only the possibility of miracles, but the very existence of Christ as a historical character, I shall doubtless be credited by some with a gratuitous task if I

[1] During three succeeding periods, Ingersoll held as many different views of the Christ of the New Testament: First, that he was a man; second, that he was either a myth or a man; third, that he was a myth. The views held during the first two periods were, of course, modified by more comprehensive research and thought.

here present any of the Great Agnostic's arguments concerning the wonders wrought by the Nazarene, or concerning his crucifixion, resurrection, or ascension. Nevertheless, as a majority would doubtless not be satisfied with the bare knowledge of Ingersoll's final conclusion that Jesus was merely a myth,—a sun-god,—and as it is deemed important to make as clear as possible the former's position on the entire subject, I propose to go somewhat further, presenting next his contention, that, even if Christ did exist in physical form, he was a man, and nothing more:—

"I do not believe that Christ ever claimed to be divine; ever claimed to be inspired; ever claimed to work a miracle. In short, I believe that he was an honest man. These claims were all put in his mouth by others—by mistaken friends, by ignorant worshipers, by zealous and credulous followers, and sometimes by dishonest and designing priests." (vii 131)

And elsewhere he inquires:—

"How could any man now, in any court, by any known rule of evidence, substantiate one of the miracles of Christ?" (ii 398)

"How could we prove, for instance, the miracle of the loaves and fishes? There were plenty of other loaves and other fishes in the world. Each one of the five thousand could have had a loaf and a fish with him. We would have to show that there was no other possible way for the people to get the bread and fish except by miracle, and then we are only half through. We must then show that they did, in fact, get enough to feed five thousand people, and that more was left than was had in the beginning.

"Of course this is simply impossible." (ii 396)

Referring to Christ's alleged raising of the dead,

Ingersoll makes an observation that by no means detracts from his reputation as a judge of human nature :—

"If you should tell a man that the dead were raised two thousand years ago, he would probably say : 'Yes, I know that.' If you should say that a hundred thousand years from now all the dead will be raised, he might say : 'Probably they will.' But if you should tell him that you saw a dead man raised and given life that day, he would likely ask the name of the insane asylum from which you had escaped." (ii 451)

Again :—

"There is one wonderful thing about the dead people that were raised—we do not hear of them any more. What became of them? * * * They did not even excite interest when they died the second time. Nobody said, 'Why, that man is not afraid. He has been there once. He has walked through the valley of the shadow.' Not a word. They pass quietly away." (ii 393)

"I do not believe these miracles," continued the Great Agnostic, in language which very clearly shows his attitude with reference to the crucifixion :—

"There was a man who did all these things, and thereupon they crucified him. Let us be honest. Suppose a man came into this city and should meet a funeral procession, and say, 'Who is dead?' and they should reply, 'The son of a widow ; her only support.' Suppose he should say to the procession, 'Halt!' and to the undertaker, 'Take out that coffin, unscrew that lid. Young man, I say unto thee, arise!' and the dead should step from the coffin and in a moment afterward hold his mother in his arms. Suppose this stranger should go to your cemetery and find some woman holding a little child in each hand, while the tears fell upon a new-made grave, and he should say to her, 'Who lies buried here?' And she should reply, 'My husband ;' and he should cry, 'I say unto thee, oh grave, give up thy dead!' and the husband should rise, and in a moment after have his lips upon his

wife's, and the little children with their arms around his neck; do you think that the people of this city would kill him? Do you think any one would wish to crucify him? Do you not rather believe that every one who had a loved one out in that cemetery would go to him, even upon their knees, and beg him to give back their dead? Do you believe that any man was ever crucified who was the master of death?" (ii 394)

"It is infinitely absurd to say that a man who cured the sick, the halt and blind, raised the dead, cast out devils, controlled the winds and waves, created food and held obedient to his will the forces of the world, was put to death by men who knew his superhuman power and who had seen his wondrous works. If the crucifixion was public, the miracles were private. If the miracles had been public, the crucifixion could not have been." (ii 399)

Of course, if there was no crucifixion, there was no resurrection; but justice to Ingersoll himself, and consideration for his critics, alike demand that we here note at least the gist of his thought on this phase of our subject:—

"The miracle of the resurrection I do not and cannot believe." (ii 400) "Why? Because it is altogether more reasonable to believe that the people were mistaken about it than that it happened. And why? Because, according to human experience, we know that people will not always tell the truth, and we never saw a miracle ourselves, and we must be governed by our experience; and if we go by our experience, we must say that the miracle never happened—that the witnesses were mistaken." (ii 392)

"How do they prove that Christ rose from the dead? They find the account in a book. Who wrote the book? They do not know. What evidence is this? None, unless all things found in books are true." (iv 90)

"* * * if the dead Christ rose from the grave, why did he not appear to his enemies? Why did he not visit Pontius Pilate? Why did he not call upon Caiaphas, the high priest? upon Herod? Why did he not again enter the temple and end the old dispute with demonstration? Why did he not confront the Roman soldiers who had

taken money to falsely swear that his body had been stolen by his friends? Why did he not make another triumphal entry into Jerusalem? Why did he not say to the multitude: 'Here are the wounds in my feet, and in my hands, and in my side. I am the one you endeavored to kill, but Death is my slave?' Simply because the resurrection is a myth." (ii 400)

We find also, that the acme and tiara of events in the life of Christ,—the gravity-scorning incident known as the ascension,—met at the hands of Ingersoll no better fate. We find it subjected to the same analysis as other miracles. Concerning its improbability, he says:—

"After the story of the Resurrection, the Ascension became a necessity. They had to dispose of the body." (iii 495) "I cannot believe in the miracle of the ascension, in the bodily ascension of Jesus Christ. Where was he going? In the light shed upon this question by the telescope, I again ask, where was he going? The New Jerusalem is not above us. The abode of the gods is not there. Where was he going? Which way did he go? Of course that depends upon the time of day he left. If he left in the evening, he went exactly the opposite way from that he would have gone had he ascended in the morning. What did he do with his body? How high did he go? In what way did he overcome the intense cold? The nearest station is the moon, two hundred and forty thousand miles away. Again I ask, where did he go? He must have had a natural body, for it was the same body that died. His body must have been material, otherwise he would not as he rose have circled with the earth, and he would have passed from the sight of his disciples at the rate of more than a thousand miles per hour." (ii 401)

Finally, as to the scriptural testimony concerning the ascension:—

"Matthew says nothing upon the subject. Either Matthew was not there, had never heard of the ascension,—or, having heard of it, did

not believe it, or, having seen it, thought it too unimportant to record. To this wonder of wonders Mark devotes one verse: 'So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right-hand of God.' Can we believe that this verse was written by one who witnessed the ascension of Jesus Christ; by one who watched his Master slowly rising through the air till distance reft him from his tearful sight? Luke, another of the witnesses, says: 'And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.' John corroborates Matthew by saying nothing on the subject. Now, we find that the last chapter of Mark, after the eighth verse, is an interpolation; so that Mark really says nothing about the occurrence. Either the ascension of Christ must be given up, or it must be admitted that the witnesses do not agree, and that three of them never heard of that most stupendous event." (vi 86)

It seems necessary to indicate Ingersoll's position in relation to but one more of the alleged "fundamental truths," namely, that Christ "was offered as a sacrifice for the sins of all who might have faith in him."

In discussing the atonement, Ingersoll begins, as in everything else, at the bottom. He declares that the doctrine is "far older than our religion," and that, while it is not even hinted at by Matthew, Mark, or Luke," * * * the necessity of belief, the atonement, and the scheme of salvation are all set forth in the Gospel of John—a gospel, in my opinion, not written until long after the others." (vi 16) As to the real origin of the doctrine, he (Ingersoll) points out, that, under the Mosaic dispensation, there was no remission of sin, except through the shedding of blood; that when a man sinned, he would bring to the priest some animal; that the

priest would lay his hands upon the animal, to which the sins of the man would thereby be transferred; that the animal would be killed in the place of the real sinner; and that when the animal's blood had been sprinkled upon the altar, Jehovah was satisfied. (ii 313) Ingersoll says:—

"Every priest became a butcher, and every sanctuary a slaughter-house. Nothing could be more utterly shocking to a refined and loving soul. Nothing could have been better calculated to harden the heart than this continual shedding of innocent blood. This terrible system is supposed to have culminated in the sacrifice of Christ. His blood took the place of all other. It is necessary to shed no more. The law at last is satisfied, satiated, surfeited. The idea that God wants blood is at the bottom of the atonement, and rests upon the most fearful savagery." (vi 17)

And Ingersoll declares:—

"We are told that the first man committed a crime for which all his posterity are responsible,—in other words, that we are accountable, and can be justly punished for a sin we never in fact committed. This absurdity was the father of another, namely, that a man can be rewarded for a good action done by another. God, according to the modern theologians, made a law, with the penalty of eternal death for its infraction. All men, they say, have broken that law. In the economy of heaven, this law had to be vindicated. This could be done by damning the whole human race. Through what is known as the atonement, the salvation of a few was made possible. They insist that the law—whatever that is—demanded the extreme penalty, that justice called for its victims, and that even mercy ceased to plead. Under these circumstances, God, by allowing the innocent to suffer, satisfactorily settled with the law, and allowed a few of the guilty to escape. The law was satisfied with this arrangement. To carry out this scheme, God was born as a babe into this world * * * [and] was sacrificed as an atonement for man. It is claimed that he actually took our place, and bore our sins and our guilt; that in this way the justice of God was satisfied, and that the blood of Christ was an

atonement, an expiation, for the sins of all who might believe on him." (vi 16)

After this expression of Ingersoll's views concerning the origin and development of the atonement, it is important that we should know his opinion as to the wisdom and justice of that institution, when examined in the light of our knowledge of cause and effect in human conduct and relations:—

"We are told that the sinner is in debt to God, and that the obligation is discharged by the Savior." (ii 315) "* * * how * * * is it possible to make the suffering of the innocent a justification for the criminal?" (vi 18) "If I rob Mr. Smith, and God forgives me, how does that help Smith? If I, by slander, cover some poor girl with the leprosy of some imputed crime, and she withers away like a blighted flower and afterward I get the forgiveness of God, how does that help her?" (i 520) "The best that can be said of such a transaction is that the debt is transferred, not paid. As a matter of fact, the sinner is in debt to the person he has injured." (ii 315) "Even when forgiven by the one you have injured, it is not as though the injury had not been done." (i 521) "We must remember that in nature there are neither rewards nor punishments—there are consequences. The life and death of Christ do not constitute an atonement." (ii 315) "We are not accountable for the sins of 'Adam' and the virtues of Christ cannot be transferred to us. There can be no vicarious virtue, no vicarious vice." (ii 473)

And elsewhere Ingersoll declares, that the doctrine of the atonement "is the enemy of morality," because "it teaches that the innocent can justly suffer for the guilty, that consequences can be avoided by repentance, and that in the world of mind the great fact known as cause and effect does not apply." (xii 63)

With the preceding sentence, I conclude the last of the arguments which I have chosen to represent Ingersoll's position in relation to such,—and such only,—of the alleged "fundamental truths" as are universally conceded to be indispensable to the Christian religion. Considering the vast and bountiful field in which selections could be made, I have, of course, given only a comparative few of the arguments advanced by the Great Agnostic on the several "truths" that it is deemed necessary to mention; but, in my opinion, even these few indubitably prove, that Ingersoll attacked not only 'the Christianity, or theology, of fifty years ago,' but the Christianity of his ripest years—yea, not only the Christianity of August 11, 1833, but the Christianity of July 21, 1899, or the latter has ceased to be a supernatural religion, and has become merely a code of morals.

If there be those who still believe in the existence of a legitimate Christianity, or, indeed, a legitimate supernatural religion of any form, which Ingersoll did not fairly and uncompromisingly assail, let them read, at first hand, the only words potent to set their minds aright. Let them go to the twelve volumes containing the wheat and efflorescence of that mighty brain for thirty-nine years, and they will marvel, not at the opinion just expressed, but at themselves. They will find that Ingersoll, the supreme general in controversial warfare, touched with "withering fire," every inch of the enemy's

field; every inch of the vast Christian edifice, from the shattered and crumbling foundation-stones, to the tarnished and toppling dome; every point, "essential" or otherwise; every so-called "fundamental truth"; every particle of "evidence"; absolutely everything connected with the Christian system,—from its inconceivable First Cause, or creator of substance and energy, to its unsychological and impossible "scheme" of atonement and paradise through faith,—from its barbaric and idiotic cosmogony, to its unthinkable heaven. They will find, in addition to the specific arguments which I have quoted, multitudinous ones to show that the God or Gods of our Bible, like all other gods, instead of being creators, were themselves created by barbarians, in a barbaric age—wombed in mental night, long before the first pale star trembled in the east of thought; that, in the biblical account of creation, contradictory to science and repugnant to common sense, there is nothing new; that it is unique to the extent that (according to Jews and Christians) it was copied into other similar accounts written many centuries before (!); that man, having already risen from the moner, was struggling for existence, upon this spinning speck we call the earth, hundreds of thousands of years before the names "Adam" and "Eve" fell from human lips; and that the universal Deluge, with the same claim to uniqueness, is simply a childish myth which Mother Nature was wont to tell in the nursery of

the race. They will find, in full, the Great Agnostic's contention, that biblical inspiration is merely pious pretension,—a poor, scarce viable foundling left by priestcraft on the doorsteps of intelligence, during the long night of the past; that the real question, after all, is not whether the Bible is inspired, but whether it is true; that if true, it needs no inspiration, but that if merely inspired, all human brains should have been inspired to read it,—should have been made precisely alike, chemically, anatomically, physiologically, psychologically, in order to attach to it the same interpretation; that, far from being "the Book of Books," it is a strange mingling of good and bad, of the monstrous, cruel, and absurd; that it is an infallible guide in none of the human relations whatsoever; that, as art, as literature, as philosophy, it is infinitely below Shakespeare's "book and volume of the brain"; and that, coffined in its blood-stained, fire-lapped, slave-tracked lids, it lies to-day upon the path of progress the greatest stumbling-block of the human race.

Let them read the twelve books of Ingersoll—those twelve apostles inspired by the glorious trinity of reason, justice, and humanity, and they will discover the best possible grounds for not merely a passive rejection of Christianity, but for an aggressive opposition to it, whether in the form in which it existed in Torquemada's sunless day, or in the form into which it is rapidly being molded

by the pseudo-religious, pseudo-scientific, vacillating, abashed, and vertebrateless apologists.

They will find, in unmistakable words, the Great Agnostic's contention that, in the mental temple of the really intelligent and unprejudiced, the figure of Christ can no longer occupy the topmost niche; that, in his teachings, there is absolutely nothing new,—nothing that had not been taught hundreds of years before; that in none of the attributes which we revere was he superior to Buddha, Chrishna, Zoroaster, Confucius, Lao-tsze, Socrates, or even Cicero; that, if we weigh in the scales of reason, observation, and experience all of the supposed sayings of Christ, we are compelled to state, that, while many of them contain the profoundest, tenderest, noblest, and loftiest thoughts, many others are absurd, impracticable, inhuman, and heartless; that Christ uttered no word in favor of the home,—no word in favor of science or education,—no word in favor of physical or intellectual liberty; and that he was ignorant of the very existence of the Western Hemisphere, although it was destined to become the hope and glory of the human race.

Let them read the twelve volumes,—listen to the silent voices of the twelve apostles,—and they will have presented to them, with all the virility of conviction born of logical, philosophical and historical insight, the argument that, in the Christian religion, there is absolutely nothing original,—

nothing good which is absent from the other great religions,—nothing good which is not in every adequate code of morals; that Christianity simply "furnished new steam for an old engine"; that all its divine personages are "foreigners"; that its purgatory, hell, and heaven, its rites, customs, and holy days, its forms, symbols, and ceremonies, are only the revamped garments, the borrowed trappings and paraphernalia, of paganism; that, for example, baptism was practised long before Christ was born; that the Hindoos, the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans had holy-water; that the eucharist is pagan; and that the very cross at the waist of the priest is a pendent plagiarism.

They will also find in the twelve books of Ingersoll the contention, that Christian ethics is unpsychological and untenable—that its hopeless impracticability is evident in the conduct of every Christian nation, which, although professing the borrowed Golden Rule and the doctrine of non-resistance (itself impracticable and absurd), is continually resisting with mailed and bloody hands; that Christianity has always persecuted to the exact extent of its power; that it is opposed to real education,—to the universal dissemination of science unmixed with superstition,—to perfect freedom of thought and expression; and that, as a benefactor of mankind, it has, after a trial of nineteen hundred years, ignominiously failed.

CHAPTER XII.

WAS HE 'A MERE ICONOCLAST'?

Did He 'Tear Down without Building Up'?

THERE IS another criticism that is even more frequently made than the one to which the preceding chapter is devoted. It holds, season after season, a conspicuous place in the repertoire of every itinerant polemic and of every zealous and sensational pulpiteer. To change the figure, it is the handiest arrow in the quiver of your orthodox warrior. Scores of times has the reader heard it; for it is on the lips of nearly every believer, who either thoughtlessly repeats it after another, or who, fancying it to be as profound and convincing as it is convenient, and knowing nothing of the basic truths and principles of rationalism, has coined it from his own crude mental ore. There is not an active advocate, nor even a passive friend, of Ingersollian principles to whom it is not as 'a twice told tale vexing the ears.' You have stood by some fountain, as in a landscape-garden, and watched the frequent playful spray fall on the sturdy face of a bronze Triton.

Scarcely need I explain that the criticism alluded

to is, that Ingersoll, wholly unlike the other great reformers who have carved their names in the marble of memory, was 'a mere iconoclast'; that he was not constructive, but destructive; that (to echo the words of the multitude) "he tore down without building up"; that "he took away all and gave nothing in return."

It was stated by Ingersoll himself, that "truth is the relation between things and thoughts, and between thoughts and thoughts." (xii 343) In order, therefore, to decide as to the justness of the criticism in question, it will be necessary to ascertain: first, the "things" or the "thoughts" represented by the word "iconoclast"; second, the "things" or the "thoughts" represented in the life-work of Ingersoll. And if we find a "relation,"—if we find that he was an iconoclast,—it will be necessary to ascertain, further, in what way, if any, and to what extent, he differed from other great men whose theories and work ran counter to the popular tendencies of their day.

Now, what is an "iconoclast"? The word is from the Greek *eikon*, an image, and *klastes*, one who breaks or destroys—one who breaks or destroys images. That is its literal meaning. But we are concerned with its figurative meaning; for it is with that meaning only that it is now employed. What, then, figuratively, is an iconoclast? "One who destroys or exposes shams, delusions, etc.; one who attacks cherished beliefs," says a

standard dictionary. Have we found a "relation"—was Ingersoll an iconoclast? For once, we are obliged to agree with his critics: he was.

But was iconoclasm all for which he stood? Was it his sole ambition? Was his life a negation? Is a cipher, woven of the withering vines of faith and fable, the only wreath that can be laid upon his tomb? Let us see.

To begin with: Robert G. Ingersoll came into this world endowed as few men ever have been endowed. He came with the analytic and synthetic powers of the logician, the intuitive insight and astronomic scope of the philosopher, and the vision of the poet. Moreover, he had in his composition what few men of great intellect have had,—the "touch of nature" that "makes the whole world kin,"—a heart absolutely sincere,—a heart incapable of wilful wrong,—a heart filled with divine enthusiasm for our race.

With such a native dowry, he would have become great as a humanitarian, even without any advantages of youthful environment. I say, "even without any advantages of youthful environment," because Ingersoll the boy, viewed as the prospective Voltaire of the nineteenth century, did have an advantageous environment. In the first place, he was poor—"nursed at the sad and loving breast of poverty"; and, in the second place, he was the son of an orthodox clergyman. These circumstances kept him close to nature, and assured him

of at least a few books—things which all boys did not have. And, what was doubly advantageous, those few books were the very ones that a prospective Voltaire should read. They were the Bible, the commentators Adam Clark, Scott, Henry and MacKnight, Cruden's *Concordance*, Calvin's *Institutes*, Paley's *Evidences*, Edwards on *The Will*, Jenkyn on the *Atonement*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Young's *Night Thoughts*, Pollok's *Course of Time*, "many volumes of orthodox sermons," the *Book of Martyrs*, the *History of the Waldenses*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted*, and Butler's *Analogy*. And Ingersoll read them—read them, each and all, throughout his youth.

And besides the circumstances just mentioned, there was another advantage: his daily life and surroundings were purely, profoundly, absolutely religious. Therefore, when he reached the years of early manhood, he possessed, in addition to a thorough and comprehensive knowledge of the basic principles of Christian theology, an intimate knowledge of its workings. The latter knowledge, be it noted, was not theoretical but practical, —gained at first hand.

The natural sequence of all this was, that, when Ingersoll discovered the falsity of what he had learned and experienced, the effect upon him was doubly strong. It was not merely a mental transition: it was a mental and moral revulsion. The theology of his youth became a hideous and melan-

choly vision, or rather, a background of mental night, on which, shining from the realm of the ideal, appeared the fair figures of Freedom and Science, beneath "the seven-hued arch" of hope. His horizon grew wide and grand. He became a circumnavigator of the intellectual globe,—a mental Magellan. Like the latter, he had seen the shadow on the moon,—the theological moon, —and he believed, in spite of the warnings and admonitions of the stupidly wise and timid, that the world of mind is round. And he demonstrated the reasonableness of his belief. Starting with the idea that there were, in the dim and far-off seas of thought, lands fairer and grander than the narrow, barren, rock-bound island of Christian theology, he returned with his views confirmed, and even strengthened. He visited the sublime continents, —the archipelagoes and coral reefs,—the enchanted isles where fountains play and sirens sing and mental gems lie gleaming on sun-steeped "sands of gold." He crossed the desert of theology,—that vast and verdureless expanse of desolation's waste without a palm,—pressed onward and upward, climbed the Everest of thought, and, with the philosophers, poets, and dreamers, saw the topmost peaks grow purple and tremulous in the morning light.

He went even further. Believing, with Max Müller, that "he who knows but one religion knows none," he studied, in comparison with Chris-

tianity, the other religions of the world. And he learned, that, barring the accident of environment, —the trappings of circumstance,—all were substantially alike; that they had a common origin; that they were born of the insatiable desire of man to account for his surroundings,—to unravel the web of existence—born of the efforts of a childlike race to wrest from mother nature the secrets of whence and whither. He found that the story of one religion is essentially the story of all; and the more stories he read, the more firmly convinced he became that all were essentially false.

Moreover, he found these stories inextricably woven into the warp and woof of human history. He found that the various religions, directly or indirectly, by fear,—by threat of punishment here and hereafter,—had destroyed the liberties of man. He saw that these religions, by fear, had manacled the brain, and that, exerting the same influence through the instrumentality of civil government, they had manacled the body. He saw that religion is the very fountain-head from which, since man was man, has flowed the blood-dyed stream of oppression. "In all ages, hypocrites, called priests, have put crowns upon the heads of thieves, called kings." Religion, he perceived, can maintain a passive existence without the temporal tyrant, because it can go to the skies for authority; but take away the foundation, the germinal idea, of religion, that is, an infinite tyrant in the skies, and not only

every spiritual but every temporal throne must crumble. But while Ingersoll recognized this, he also recognized, as already indicated, that, as a matter of history, religion had never sought to exist wholly apart from the state, but that, on the contrary, the two had vied with each other in the work of oppression; and so he said:—

"The church and the state—two vultures—have fed upon the liberties of man."

And it was with all these facts vividly before his mind; with the thought of man's slow and painful journey toward the light; with memories of the Middle Ages, of the Crusades, of the Inquisition's horrid night, of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, of the murder of the Huguenots, of the expulsion of the Jews and the Moors from Spain; it was with tear-dimmed eyes upon the flames that clothed in fadeless raiment the forms of Servetus and Bruno; it was while groping his way, with the noblest of our race, through the dark and earless gloom of the Inquisition,—over the blood-stained stones,—that he wrote this incomparable passage:—

"And then my heart was filled with gratitude, with thankfulness, and went out in love to all the heroes, the thinkers who gave their lives for the liberty of hand and brain—for the freedom of labor and thought—to those who fell on the fierce fields of war—to those who died in dungeons bound with chains—to those who proudly mounted scaffolds' stairs—to those whose bones were crushed, whose flesh was scarred and torn—to those by fire consumed—to all the wise, the good, the brave of every land, whose thoughts and deeds have given

freedom to the sons of men. *And then I vowed to grasp the torch that they had held, and hold it high, that light might conquer darkness still.*" (iv 66) [1]

Whoever would form a just estimate of Ingersoll's work and worth,—whoever would pronounce the final declaration as to whether Ingersoll was a reformer or an iconoclast,—must bear in mind these grateful words, this lofty resolution. He must understand Ingersoll's ideals, and the conditions that he encountered. He must consider the " images " which Ingersoll sought to break, and his reasons for seeking to break them,—whether for the sake of mere destruction, or to clear the ground, that those to come might ' build more stately.'

Studying the factors that influenced or determined the career of Ingersoll, we naturally turn to a part of his century's theological history. The great religious revival of 1857 arrests our attention. The deprivations and sufferings incident to the serious business reverses, during the latter part of that year, resulted, as such conditions invariably result, in a profound and far-reaching " spiritual " awakening. Localities the most conspicuous in business and financial failure, naturally became the most conspicuous in religious enthusiasm. In New York City, noonday prayer-meetings were numerous, Christian themes were topics of conversation, and the leading dailies reported, by columns and

[1] The italics are mine.

pages, the news of revivals. The interest was intense; and what was true of New York was true of every village and hamlet in the land. That this unusual and widespread zeal was dependent upon the prevailing "hard times" seems indubitably proven, particularly in view of the fact that very few itinerant evangelists were abroad in the land. The whole country was orthodox to the core—a juxtaposition which, if it did not inspire, amply justified, this epigram of Ingersoll: "He who eats a crust wet with his own tears worships."

The succeeding years of civil war, although they necessarily inhibited the growth and prosperity of the churches, do not appear permanently to have weakened the hold that superstition had secured upon the masses. The appalling spectacle of every sect of the Southern church declaring, as a unit, for the "divine" institution of human slavery,[1] and supporting by passages of Scripture their arrogant declarations, did not prompt any considerable number of even the friends of liberty in the North to take a look under their own pulpits. Neither the Northern nor the Southern Christian could see the inconsistency of offering to the same God the same prayer for victory. And I may here be allowed digression to the extent of observing,

[1] To give an example: In 1863, the Presbyterian Church, South, passed in general synod the following resolutions: "*Resolved*, That slavery is a divine institution. *Resolved*, That God raised up the Presbyterian Church, South, to protect and perpetuate that institution."

that, although the South still adheres alike to the justice of her God and of her cause, she has never explained why her prayers were not answered. However, the North triumphed: physical slavery perished: intellectual slavery remained. The country was still orthodox. The seeds of superstition which had been so widely sown by the hand of want, during 1857, and subsequently, and which, for the most part, had lain fallow throughout the years of strife, now burst into the bud and blossom of religious enthusiasm. Revivals were even more frequent than in ante-bellum days. The people of the North, in some inconceivable way, saw that the sword of victory had been wielded by the arm of Providence, while those of the South, strangers still to reason, humbly submitted to the inscrutable ways of the same Power. Industrial and agricultural resumption, particularly in the North, gave bountifully to the reconstruction of the vast and complex religious mechanism; and the church was soon again arrogant, powerful, and cruel.

During the great struggle, the insolence of Catholicism was not mitigated; and in December, 1864, the pope, in his famous encyclical, not only condemned absolutely everything that is grand and ennobling in modern civilization and culture, but (in the accompanying syllabus) enumerated and anathematized all of the rational theories and philosophical principles upon which science had placed her stamp of approval. And as though

determined to break the back of the theological camel, he proclaimed, six years later, infallibility for Pius IX and his predecessors.

When, therefore, Ingersoll reached the stage of physical and intellectual maturity and took a view of his surroundings, what did he behold? His country, the Great Republic that he loved, in theological bondage. He beheld a people that had been grand enough to strike the physical manacles from four million human beings, themselves lying prostrate in mental manacles. He beheld the withering blight and sear of orthodox superstition, with only here and there a spot of verdant sod; and he knew, that, if the church could have its way, even those few spots would soon be withered or charred. He knew that thousands of homes were simply penitentiaries for wives and children; that the public school was still an instrumentality for disseminating the doctrines of a particular religion at general expense; that there was scarcely an educational institution where thought was free; that the statute-books of many states were disgraced by cruel, ignorant, and barbaric laws, passed by pious stupidity, concerning "blasphemy" and the rights of unbelievers; that in some states an "infidel" would not be allowed to testify to the fact that he had witnessed the murder of his wife and children.[1] He saw the real thinkers,—the intel-

[1] "In most of the states of this Union I could not give testimony. Should a man be murdered before my eyes, I could not tell a jury who did it." (viii 227)

lectually honest and fearless,—derided, scorned, ostracized, and even imprisoned, by the educated ignorance,—the respectable inanity,—of the time. He heard the memories of the noblest,—the mental and moral heroes of the race,—slandered and maligned by orthodox malice. He knew that the infamy of corporal punishment was still practised by the state, and in the school and the home; that the gallows and the whipping-post still cast their shadows—hideous shades from the midnight of savagery—in a land where should fall only the glad sunlight of intelligence; that in many states, citizens were mobbed, tortured, and murdered, despite the Constitution which they had fought to preserve; that politics and the press lived in a kind of shuddering fear under the frown of the pulpit; and that art, literature, and even science herself, were tainted with the touch of superstition.

These, in brief, are the conditions which Ingersoll beheld when, at maturity, he critically surveyed his surroundings; and these conditions it was, that, appealing to his intense love of liberty and humanity,—his profound and overmastering sense of justice,—forced him into an aggressive anti-theological, humanitarian crusade. Indeed, this is but mildly stated. For whoever has read, with tolerable intelligence, even one of Ingersoll's rationalistic discourses knows that it was the unnatural and absurd, the narrow and bigoted, the cruel and heartless, in theology, that made him what he was.

His earliest lecture, *Progress*, first delivered when he was only twenty-seven years of age, furnishes abundant proof of this; but it is in the commencement of *Some Mistakes of Moses*,—that chart and compass for the unwary through the mist-bound sea of Jewish tradition,—that we find the most concise statement of his purpose. He says:—

"I want to do what little I can to make my country truly free, to broaden the intellectual horizon of our people, to destroy the prejudices born of ignorance and fear, to do away with the blind worship of the ignoble past, with the idea that all the great and good are dead, that the living are totally depraved, that all pleasures are sins, that sighs and groans are alone pleasing to God, that thought is dangerous, that intellectual courage is a crime, that cowardice is a virtue, that a certain belief is necessary to secure salvation, that to carry a cross in this world will give us a palm in the next, and that we must allow some priest to be the pilot of our souls." (ii 13)

Fifteen years later, answering the query of a member of the British press as to how he came to assume the aggressive with reference to Christianity, he stated:—

"We call this America of ours free, and yet I found it was very far from free. Our writers and our speakers declared that here in America church and state were divorced. I found this to be untrue. I found that the church was supported by the state in many ways, that people who failed to believe certain portions of the creeds were not allowed to testify in courts or to hold office. It occurred to me that some one ought to do something toward making this country intellectually free, and after a while I thought that I might as well endeavor to do this as wait for another." (viii 541)

The question of Ingersoll's purpose having been answered, the next question naturally is, What

course did he pursue? Vividly conscious of the conditions that I have indicated; thoroughly familiar with superstition's motley brood, and longing for the freedom of mankind therefrom, What procedure did he adopt? Was he a destroyer or a builder? Unhesitatingly I answer: He was neither, exclusively: he was both—the very circumstance that made him the truest and greatest reformer of his day. If at times he was more destructive than constructive, more of an iconoclast than of a builder, it was because, in the necessity of things, he could not be otherwise. He knew that the first essential to reform is dissatisfaction. He knew that doubt is the womb of investigation, and that investigation is the Hermes, the winged messenger, of the goddess of freedom. He was acquainted with nature —understood her requirements and methods. He knew better than to sow grain in a jungle, or to undertake the erection of a palace above a bed of mire. He knew that every sunlit field with flower-starred verdure clad was once a tangled forest-wild; that where the marble arteries of the metropolis now pulse and throb was once the untroubled haunt of the savage and the beast. And he saw that what is true of the physical realm must hold good in the realm of mind. He realized that if the mental slopes of mankind are ever billowed with golden wheat, it will be after the brush and briers, the thistles and poison-ivy, of ignorance are cut and burned away. He knew that if to intellectual

liberty there ever rises a temple whose dome companions the stars, it will rest upon the hard-pan of reason, not upon the muck of some decadent faith. He knew that if this earth ever becomes a throne whereon sits justice with the balanced scales,—if it ever realizes the cherished dream of "the greatest happiness for the greatest number,"—it will be after the lifeless ashes of the monster superstition are given to the winds. And so he sought, with all his strength, the death of that monster, not failing, however, to plant, wherever he could, the blessed seeds which shall some day fill the land with fruitage and fragrance.

It has often been asserted, that his method of attacking what is called religion cannot be justified; that however profoundly convinced of its falsity he may have been, his course was altogether unwarranted. It has been claimed (to quote Gladstone as typical of the critics), that many of the subjects with which Ingersoll dealt "can only be approached in a deep reverential calm," and that, therefore, his witticisms and jokes, his sarcasm and satire, his irony and ridicule, were inconsiderate of the finer feelings and sensibilities of others. In this connection, Ingersoll himself has said:—

"It is claimed by many that anything, the best and holiest, can be ridiculed. As a matter of fact, he who attempts to ridicule the truth, ridicules himself. He becomes the food of his own laughter.

"The mind of man is many-sided. Truth must be and is willing to be tested in every way, tested by all the senses.

"But in what way can the absurdity of the 'real presence' be answered, except by banter, by raillery, by ridicule, by persiflage? How are you going to convince a man who believes that when he swallows the sacred wafer he has eaten the entire Trinity, and that a priest drinking a drop of wine has devoured the Infinite? How are you to reason with a man who believes that if any of the sacred wafers are left over they should be put in a secure place, so that mice should not eat God?

"What effect will logic have upon a religious gentleman who firmly believes that a God of infinite compassion sent two bears to tear thirty or forty children in pieces for laughing at a bald-headed prophet?

"How are such people to be answered? How can they be brought to a sense of their absurdity? They must feel in their flesh the arrows of ridicule." (iii 206)

Now, what in the Christian system, it may be asked, did Ingersoll ridicule? What was it that he failed to approach "in a deep reverential calm"? Can it be shown that he ridiculed anything which conduces to the real and permanent welfare of mankind?

Did he ridicule the Ten Commandments? There are two sets; and of them, he kept, and advised others to keep, all that are of the slightest value.

Did he ever make of Christ a subject of ridicule?—

"And let me say here, once for all, that for the man Christ I have infinite respect. Let me say, once for all, that the place where man has died for man is holy ground. And let me say, once for all, that to that great and serene man I gladly pay, I gladly pay, the tribute of my admiration and my tears. He was a reformer in his day. He was an infidel in his time. He was regarded as a blasphemer, and his life was destroyed by hypocrites, who have, in all ages, done what they could to trample freedom and manhood out of the human mind. Had I lived at that time I would have been his friend, and should he come again he will not find a better friend than I will be. * * *

"* * * Back of the theological shreds, rags, and patches, hiding the real Christ, I see a genuine man." (i 456)

Did he ridicule the mother of the great Nazarene?—did he despise maternity?—

"The holiest word is mother."

In what way did he ridicule the Sermon on the Mount? By accepting, with sincere gratitude, all of it that is good, all that is of value to mankind.

To what words of derision did he expose the Golden Rule? To these:—

"Give to every other human being every right that you claim for yourself."

What, then, did Ingersoll ridicule? He ridiculed the ridiculous.

It is here necessary to take a broad and ample view of our reformer,—the full measure of the man. Robert G. Ingersoll, at the noon of life, was the physical, mental, and moral ideal—the embodiment of the highest possibilities of his race. By this I do not mean that he was wholly a god, nor a manlike god, nor even a godlike man—he was a *man*,—absolutely human. He was of this world worldly, worldly in the noblest sense. Of the *now* and the *here*, he made the most and best. "Every moment was a melody," every hour a harmony, every day a symphony. There was inexpressible delight in the mere fact of being,—a joy in every pulse and breath. Buoyant with health, prodigal

of optimism and cheerfulness, which welled up to spontaneous overflow in every channel of expression, his name, to all who really knew him, was a reassurance, his handclasp an exaltation, his smile sunshine, his voice a caress, his presence a benediction. However small, however large the circle that he might chance to enter, he was always, by nature's decree, the farthest from the circumference: he filled and held the center. He loved and trusted humanity with the childlike simplicity of true greatness. He never lost his faith. He was ever hopeful, proclaiming in life's storm and winter the bow upon the clouds, the harbingers of spring.

And even this characterization, adequate as it may seem, entirely ignores one of the most notable manifestations of his nature. Indeed, love of beauty was a characteristic that at once distinguished him from the rest of the world's great reformers. A delicate sense of the esthetic,—an unusual impressionableness to beauty,—permeated his very being and shed its refining influence throughout his life. In the work of no other reformer,—religious, political, or social,—do we find the love of universal liberty and justice,—of humanity,—so indissolubly mingled with the love of proportion, of symmetry, of harmony,—of the beautiful,—"in nature, art, and conduct." In fact, in the work of nearly all others who have wrought with tongue and pen the miracles and oracles of progress, we perceive, with regret, a lack of the

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From a photograph by Julius Ulke. Washington.

esthetic sense. In the work of Ingersoll, quite to the contrary, we behold the lover and creator of beauty, as well as the lover of humanity—the full-rounded, ideal man. Other reformers, for the most part, appeal to the head alone. Ingersoll appealed to the head and the heart together, and not only to them, but to the deepest, the highest, the finest esthetic sensibilities, elevating and ennobling by indirection while he enlightened and convinced. Most reformers, at best, are only oaks, sufficient, perhaps, in height and arboreal amplitude, but with trunks here and there exposed from the asymmetry of deficient or too well-gnarled limbs. But Ingersoll was an oak that rose sturdy and stately, symmetrical and grand, beneath the sun and blue,—an oak round which the vine of beauty twined fragrant with the flowers of love, flowers that seemed ever wet with dew.

Let us now turn to the alleged result of Ingersoll's iconoclasm. Let us consider the sweeping assertion, that he 'took away everything and gave nothing in return.' According to his critics, the effect of his work was to destroy the loftiest ideals and aspirations, the noblest and tenderest hopes, leaving the soul to struggle forever in the rayless depths of despair. In other words, Ingersoll waved the wand of persuasiveness,—of eloquence,—and the reader or hearer, an orthodox Christian,—sustained, comforted, and guided by his faith,—became, presto! a full-fledged, or rather, a fledgeless

rationalist, sinking, as he wallowed, in the fathomless mire of infidelity.

Now, we willingly admit, that, to change in a twinkling an orthodox or even a nominal believer to a person with no ideals or hopes, would indeed constitute a phenomenon to be deplored. But is such a phenomenon,—such a transition,—possible? It must be remembered, that the mind, as Ingersoll says, is many-sided. It subsists neither wholly upon affirmations nor wholly upon negations,—is neither wholly positive nor wholly negative. Quite differently, in connection with every question that can concern it, there is, between these two antithetic extremes, a series of almost inappreciable gradations. Between affirmation and denial stretches, without a missing rung, the psychological ladder. Conviction does not pass up and down this ladder by leaps and bounds: it goes rung by rung. It may go quite rapidly for a rung or two, in either direction, and it may fancy that it has traveled the entire length without touching a rung, whereas, in reality, it has rested, if for only an inappreciable time, on each.

Furthermore, we know, if we know anything, that there is in the realm of reason a law of compensation,—an insistence on reciprocity. Indeed, the minds of the world may be likened to so many countries among which there is commercial intercourse. By virtue of agreement whereby one country exchanges with another those articles of

which it produces a superabundance for those of which it produces few or none, and vice versa, mutual satisfaction results. So it is, in effect, in the realm of reason. In every mind, there is what we will call the ideal; and this ideal must be satisfied, and always is satisfied,—always sees to it that there is compensation, reciprocity. Nothing is 'taken away' without giving something "in return"—nothing 'torn down' without "building" something "up."

The truth is, that, however well it may be established by usage, the term "iconoclast," exclusively applied to men of Ingersoll's class, is an utter misnomer. Candidly speaking, reform without iconoclasm is impossible. The greatest reformers have been the greatest iconoclasts. An individual's iconoclasm is directly proportional to his knowledge. The more he knows, the more he is unlike his fellows, and consequently the more he disagrees with them; that is to say, the more "images" he is obliged to break, if he is mentally honest, and makes known to them his ideas and ideals of reform. "Iconoclast" is one of the missiles which the rabble hurl at the true reformer. It is a jagged fragment of the discredited idol which the latter has thrown to the ground. In other words, to make room for a palace of moral and esthetic grandeur, the true reformer,—the intellectual architect,—razes the mental hovel, whereupon the ignorant and superstitious multitude grab

the shattered remnants, cry "Iconoclast!" and endeavor to bludgeon him into subjection.

The greatest reformers, I repeat, have been the greatest iconoclasts. The scriptural Christ, if he existed, was an iconoclast: he sought to destroy Judaism. Columbus and Magellan were iconoclasts: they upset the mental images of the patristic geographers. Copernicus and Kepler, Galilei and Bruno, were iconoclasts. Shakespeare was an iconoclast: he violated the unities of the Greek drama; but he was "the most intellectual of the human race." Thomas Paine was an iconoclast: he shattered the tyrannical idols of "divine right," and sowed the seeds of the Declaration of Independence. Darwin was an iconoclast,—one of the very greatest: he broke the images of biological science, though they were worshiped by the most eminent scientists of his day. Wagner was an iconoclast: he disregarded the rules of composition, and—wrote the sublimest music of this world. Whitman was another iconoclast—Whitman, the uncouth Samson who pulled down the pillars of the temple of prosody, scorned the prison-walls and barred cages, hurled aside the strait-jackets of osteological poetry, ignored every rule of English verse, and—"wrote a liturgy for mankind."

To the charge of iconoclasm, every one of these men was required, in his turn, to plead. That Ingersoll was required to do likewise is not surprising to the student of intellectual progress.

And while he might have answered, with justification, in the language of Voltaire—"What? I have delivered you from the jaws of a wild beast that was devouring you, and you ask me what I will give you in its place!"—these terse, laconic words by no means served as his reply.

What did so serve? What did Ingersoll say to the charge that he was a 'mere iconoclast'?—that his teachings were 'negative,' 'destructive'?—that 'he tore down without building up'?—that 'he took away everything and gave nothing in return'? Or, more pointedly, what *did* he give 'in return' for what, as his critics correctly state, 'he took away'? Well, to begin with, he gave this:—

"To love justice, to long for the right, to love mercy, to pity the suffering, to assist the weak, to forget wrongs and remember benefits—to love the truth, to be sincere, to utter honest words, to love liberty, to wage relentless war against slavery in all its forms, to love wife and child and friend, to make a happy home, to love the beautiful in art, in nature, to cultivate the mind, to be familiar with the mighty thoughts that genius has expressed, the noble deeds of all the world, to cultivate courage and cheerfulness, to make others happy, to fill life with the splendor of generous acts, the warmth of loving words, to discard error, to destroy prejudice, to receive new truths with gladness, to cultivate hope, to see the calm beyond the storm, the dawn beyond the night, to do the best that can be done and then to be resigned—this is *the religion of reason, the creed of science.* This satisfies the brain and heart." (iv 290)[1]

He gave what he here terms—and let us repeat it—"*the religion of reason, the creed of science*,"

[1] The italics are mine.

and what he elsewhere so variously and so insistently proclaims as "*the gospel of this world*," "*the gospel of good health*," "*the religion of the body*," "*the evangel of health and joy*." He gave "*the gospel of the fireside*," "*the religion of the home*." He gave "*the gospel of good living*," and "*the gospel of good fellowship*." He gave "*the gospel of intelligence*," "*the religion of usefulness*," "*the religion of humanity*."[1]

And all this, they tell us, is the work of 'a mere iconoclast'! Think of it!—of the impossible critical monstrosity thus brought before our gaze!

Here is a man who spent his lifelong years in the defense and championship, the exaltation—the glorification and immortalization—of love, liberty, truth, reason, justice, mercy, generosity, honesty, patriotism, virtue, marriage, maternity, beauty, art, genius; and he is termed 'a mere iconoclast'! Why? Is it because to defend, champion, exalt, glorify, and immortalize their opposites is to be 'a builder'?

But let us go a little deeper. Let us definitely and specifically examine Ingersoll in some of the great fundamental subjects the attitude toward which inevitably and finally determines the worth and standing of a reformer. By universal agreement, *truth* is one of those subjects. A majority of Ingersoll's critics profess to regard it as the first.

[1] The italics are mine.

Now, Ingersoll not only dealt with truth, here and there, in all his discourses, but, as indicated in Chapter IX, he devoted an entire lecture to *The Truth*. What did he say?—

"Truth is the relation between things and thoughts, and between thoughts and thoughts. The perception of this relation bears the same relation to the logical faculty in man, that music does to some portion of the brain—that is to say, it is a mental melody. This sublime strain has been heard by a few, and I am enthusiastic enough to believe that it will be the music of the future." (xii 343)[1]

"Nothing is greater, nothing is of more importance, than to find amid the errors and darkness of this life, a shining truth.

"Truth is the intellectual wealth of the world.

"The noblest of occupations is to search for truth.

"Truth is the foundation, the superstructure, and the glittering dome of progress.

"Truth is the mother of joy. Truth civilizes, ennobles, and purifies. The grandest ambition that can enter the soul is to know the truth.

"Truth gives man the greatest power for good. Truth is sword and shield. It is the sacred light of the soul.

"The man who finds a truth lights a torch." (iv 72)

"Every man should be true to himself—true to the inward light." (iv 73) "He should preserve as his most precious jewel the perfect veracity of his soul." (iv 74) "Each man, in the laboratory of his own mind, and for himself alone, should test the so-called facts—the theories of all the world. Truth, *in accordance with his reason*, should be his guide and master." (iv 73)

Do these definitions, conclusions, and teachings make Ingersoll a 'destroyer'? Yes: a destroyer of untruth. Do they make him 'a mere iconoclast'? No: not unless the teaching of untruth makes a true reformer; not unless falsehood "is the intellectual wealth of the world"; not unless

[1] Only the first sentence of this extract was quoted on page 280.

falsehood, "in accordance with his" superstition, "should be" the true reformer's "guide and master."

Ingersoll lectured for twenty years on *The Liberty of Man, Woman, and Child.* What did he say?—

"By physical liberty I mean the right to do anything which does not interfere with the happiness of another. By intellectual liberty I mean the right to think right and the right to think wrong, provided you do your best to think right." (i 353, vii 6)

"Liberty sustains the same relation to mind that space does to matter." (i 329)

"What light is to the eyes, what love is to the heart, Liberty is to the soul of man."

"Without liberty, the brain is a dungeon and the soul a convict."

"To preserve liberty is the only use for government. There is no other excuse for legislatures, or presidents, or courts, for statutes or decisions. Liberty is not simply a means—it is an end. Take from our history, our literature, our laws, our hearts—that word, and we are nought but moulded clay. Liberty is the one priceless jewel. It includes and holds and is the weal and wealth of life. Liberty is the soil and light and rain—it is the plant and bud and flower and fruit—and in that sacred word lie all the seeds of progress, love and joy." (*Prose-Poems and Selections*, p. 201.)

"Liberty, a word without which all other words are vain." (i 209)

Do these definitions, conclusions, and teachings make Ingersoll a 'destroyer'? Yes: a destroyer of slavery. Do they make him 'a mere iconoclast'? No: not unless their exact opposite makes a true reformer; not unless slavery is "a word without which all other words are vain."

What were Ingersoll's ideas of justice?—

"The rights of all are equal: Justice, poised and balanced in eternal

calm, will shake from the golden scales in which are weighed the, acts of men, the very dust of prejudice and caste: No race, no color no previous condition, can change the rights of men." (ix 91)

"* * * when the sword of justice becomes a staff to support the weak, it bursts into blossom. * * *" (iii 412)

"Justice is the only worship."

Need I ask whether these are the words of 'a mere iconoclast'? If they are, then human speech has lost all meaning, and become "the babbling gossip of the air."

Nor are we, by any means, forced to conclude our examination here: we might continue almost indefinitely, receiving like answers on each and every one of the great fundamentals. And even then we should have covered only one side; for the following questions would remain: Did Ingersoll ever oppose, for a single instant, any of the things of which he thus far appears to have been the steadfast defender and champion? Did he ever utter or write one word against love, liberty, truth, reason, justice, mercy, generosity, honesty, patriotism, virtue, marriage, maternity, beauty, art, genius? Is there extant a speech, address, essay, lecture, oration, or poem of his which fails to favor one or all of the latter in the most positive terms? Each of these questions must be answered with an emphatic *No!* Why, then, was he called 'a mere iconoclast'? Because he would not compromise. And he would not compromise, because he was absolutely honest,—because he knew that—

"A compromise is a bargain in which each party defrauds the other, and himself." (ix 443)

Far from 'a mere iconoclast,' or 'the great iconoclast,' it would be more nearly just to term him "the great builder." For, despite the iconoclasm with which he is so rightly, so nobly, so gloriously charged, there is in his teachings more of the truly constructive, the truly progressive, the truly ethical, than in those of any of the many other reformers who have addressed themselves to the brain and heart of the English-speaking world. There is no need to take my word for this: read his works and theirs.

But as this invitation imposes a task too extensive to be in furtherance of our immediate purpose, I shall here lay before the reader some of Ingersoll's reformative teachings. Deferring, for consideration in the two succeeding chapters, the charge that the tendency of his work was to destroy the foundations of law and morality and the hope of immortality, and deferring also, for presentation in still later chapters, his constructive teachings (and practical exemplifications) in domestic and political fields, I shall here give some indication of the way in which he sought to apply the ideas of truth, liberty, justice, etc. of which the preceding paragraphs show him to have been so firmly convinced.

In so doing, let me first indicate, in his own

words, his understanding of what is "positive" and what "negative" in reformative values :—

"There is an idea that Christianity is positive, and Infidelity is negative. If this be so, then falsehood is positive and truth is negative. What I contend is that Infidelity is a positive religion; that Christianity is a negative religion. Christianity denies and Infidelity admits. Infidelity stands by facts; it demonstrates by the conclusions of the reason. Infidelity does all it can to develop the brain and the heart of man. That is positive. Religion asks man to give up this world for one he knows nothing about. That is negative. I stand by *the religion of reason.* I stand by the dogmas of demonstration." (xi 495)[1]

Again, more comprehensively :—

"The object of the Freethinker is to ascertain the truth—the conditions of well-being—to the end that this life will be made of value. This is the affirmative, positive, and constructive side.

"Without liberty there is no such thing as real happiness. * * *

"All religious systems enslave the mind. Certain things are demanded—certain things must be believed—certain things must be done—and the man who becomes the subject or servant of this superstition must give up all idea of individuality or hope of intellectual growth and progress.

"The religionist informs us that there is somewhere in the universe an orthodox God, who is endeavoring to govern the world, and who for this purpose resorts to famine and flood, to earthquake and pestilence * * * . That is called affirmative and positive.

"The man of sense knows that no such God exists, and thereupon he affirms that the orthodox doctrine is infinitely absurd. This is called a 'negation.' But to my mind it is an affirmation, and is a part of the positive side of Freethought.[2]

"A man who compels this Deity to abdicate his throne renders a vast and splendid service to the human race.

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[1] The italics are mine.

[2] "Freethought" is here synonymous with "Infidelity."

"It will thus be seen that there is an affirmative, a positive, a constructive side to Freethought.

"What is the positive side?

"First: A denial of all orthodox falsehoods—an exposure of all superstitions. * * * Then comes another phase—another kind of work. The Freethinker knows that the universe is natural—that there is no room, even in infinite space, for the miraculous, for the impossible. * * * He feels that all in the universe are conditioned beings, and that only those are happy who live in accordance with the conditions of happiness. * * *

"The positive side is this: That every good action has good consequences—that it bears good fruit forever—and that every bad action has evil consequences, and bears bad fruit. The Freethinker also asserts that every man must bear the consequences of his actions—that he must reap what he sows, and that he cannot be justified by the goodness of another, or damned for the wickedness of another.

* * * * * * * *

"The positive side of Freethought is to find out the truth—the facts of nature—to the end that we may take advantage of those truths, of those facts—for the purpose of feeding and clothing and educating mankind.

"In the first place, we wish to find that which will lengthen human life—that which will prevent or kill disease—that which will do away with pain—that which will preserve or give us health.

"We also want to go in partnership with these forces of nature, to the end that we may be well fed and clothed—that we may have good houses that protect us from heat and cold. And beyond this—beyond these simple necessities—there are still wants and aspirations; and Freethought will give us the highest possible in art—the most wonderful and thrilling in music—the greatest paintings, the most marvelous sculpture—in other words, Freethought will develop the brain to its utmost capacity. Freethought is the mother of art and science, of morality and happiness.

* * * * * * * *

"Freethought has given us all we have of value. It has been the great constructive force. It is the only discoverer, and every science is its child." (xi 437)

And again:—

"I understand that the word Secularism[1] embraces everything that is of any real interest or value to the human race. I take it for granted that everybody will admit that well-being is the only good; that is to say, that it is impossible to conceive of anything of real value that does not tend either to preserve or to increase the happiness of some sentient being. Secularism, therefore, covers the entire territory. It fills the circumference of human knowledge and of human effort. It is, you may say, *the religion of this world*;[2] but if there is another world, it is necessarily the religion of that, as well.

* * * * * * * *

"Secularism teaches us to be good here and now. I know nothing better than goodness. Secularism teaches us to be just here and now. It is impossible to be juster than just.

"Man can be as just in this world as in any other, and justice must be the same in all worlds. Secularism teaches a man to be generous, and generosity is certainly as good here as it can be anywhere else. Secularism teaches a man to be charitable, and certainly charity is as beautiful in this world and in this short life as it could be were man immortal.

"But orthodox people insist that there is something higher than Secularism; but, as a matter of fact, the mind of man can conceive of nothing better, nothing higher, nothing more *spiritual*,[3] than goodness, justice, generosity, charity. Neither has the mind of man been capable of finding a nobler incentive to action than human love." (viii 390)

And just here, it is important to know what it is, according to Ingersoll's understanding, to be "*really spiritual*"[4]:—

"The spiritual man lives to his ideal. He endeavors to make others happy. He does not despise the passions that have filled the world with art and glory. He loves his wife and children—home and

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[1] "Secularism" is here synonymous with "Infidelity" and "Freethought."

[2] The italics are mine.

[3] The italics are mine.

[4] The italics are mine.

fireside. He cultivates the amenities and refinements of life. He is the friend and champion of the oppressed. His sympathies are with the poor and the suffering. He attacks what he believes to be wrong, though defended by the many, and he is willing to stand for the right against the world. He enjoys the beautiful. In the presence of the highest creations of Art his eyes are suffused with tears. When he listens to the great melodies, the divine harmonies, he feels the sorrows and the raptures of death and love. He is intensely human. He carries in his heart the burdens of the world. He searches for the deeper meanings. He appreciates the harmonies of conduct, the melody of a perfect life.

"He loves his wife and children better than any god. He cares more for the world he lives in than for any other. He tries to discharge the duties of this life, to help those that he can reach. He believes in being useful—in making money to feed and clothe and educate the ones he loves—to assist the deserving and to support himself. He does not wish to be a burden on others. He is just, generous and sincere.

* * * * * * * *

"The spiritually-minded man is a poet. If he does not write poetry, he lives it. He is an artist. If he does not paint pictures or chisel statues, he feels them, and their beauty softens his heart. He fills the temple of his soul with all that is beautiful, and he worships at the shrine of the Ideal." (xi 484)

It will accordingly be seen, that the precepts and doctrines of which Ingersoll was the foremost advocate, and which are so variously denominated "Infidelity," "Freethought," "Secularism," etc., are not, in his opinion, 'merely negative and destructive'; that, taking 'truth, in accordance with reason, as the only guide and master' in the realm of intellect, they 'merely negative' what is intellectually wrong, while affirming all that is intellectually right; that, taking happiness, well-being, as the "only guide and master" in the realm of

morals, they 'merely negative' what is morally wrong, while affirming all that is morally right; and that, therefore, they are not only affirmative, positive, and constructive, but ethical, and even spiritual,—that they are, ever have been, and ever must be, the one coherent, unified, and truly reformative force. This will become more undeniably apparent as we proceed.

Thus, answering the great question, "How can we reform the world?" Ingersoll said:—

"Ignorance being darkness, what we need is intellectual light. The most important things to teach, as the basis of all progress, are that the universe is natural; that man must be the providence of man; that, by the development of the brain, we can avoid some of the dangers, some of the evils, overcome some of the obstructions, and take advantage of some of the facts and forces of nature; that, by invention and industry, we can supply, to a reasonable degree, the wants of the body, and by thought, study and effort, we can in part satisfy the hunger of the mind.

* * * * * * * *

"Being satisfied that the supernatural does not exist, man should turn his entire attention to the affairs of this world, to the facts in nature." (iv 123)

And one of the first things which Ingersoll would have man do, in so 'turning his attention,' was to stop the useless and inhuman waste of energy and wealth. He would do this, in great part, by appealing to reason and justice in settling all national and international disputes. For just as intense as Ingersoll's abhorrence of falsehood and his love of truth, were his abhorrence of war and his love of peace. He said:—

"No man has imagination enough to paint the agonies, the horrors and cruelties of war. Think of sending shot and shell crashing through the bodies of men! Think of the widows and orphans! Think of the maimed, the mutilated, the mangled!" (iv 126)

In the following, he manifests the diagnostic insight of the true reformer:—

"As long as nations meet on the fields of war—as long as they sustain the relations of savages to each other—as long as they put the laurel and the oak on the brows of those who kill—just so long will citizens resort to violence, and the quarrels of individuals be settled by dagger and revolver." (xi 158)

Painfully conscious, therefore, of this useless waste,—this cruelty,—this perpetual excuse for individual violence and crime,—he addressed to the brain and the heart of mankind the following appeal:—

"Every good man, every good woman, should try to do away with war, to stop the appeal to savage force. Man in a savage state relies upon his strength, and decides for himself what is right and what is wrong. Civilized men do not settle their differences by a resort to arms. They submit the quarrel to arbitrators and courts. This is the great difference between the savage and the civilized. Nations, however, sustain the relations of savages to each other. There is no way of settling their disputes. Each nation decides for itself, and each nation endeavors to carry its decision into effect. This produces war. Thousands of men at this moment [1896] are trying to invent more deadly weapons to destroy their fellow-men. For eighteen hundred years peace has been preached, and yet the civilized nations are the most warlike of the world. There are in Europe to-day between eleven and twelve millions of soldiers, ready to take the field, and the frontiers of every civilized nation are protected by breastwork and fort. The sea is covered with steel-clad ships, filled with missiles of death. The civilized world has impoverished itself, and the debt of Christendom, mostly for war, is now nearly thirty thousand million

dollars. The interest on this vast sum has to be paid; it has to be paid by labor, much of it by the poor, by those who are compelled to deny themselves almost the necessities of life. This debt is growing year by year. There must come a change, or Christendom will become bankrupt.

"The interest on this debt amounts at least to nine hundred million dollars a year; and the cost of supporting armies and navies, of repairing ships, of manufacturing new engines of death, probably amounts, including the interest on the debt, to at least six million dollars a day. Allowing ten hours for a day, that is for a working-day, the waste of war is at least six hundred thousand dollars an hour, that is to say, ten thousand dollars a minute.

"Think of all this being paid for the purpose of killing and preparing to kill our fellow-men. Think of the good that could be done with this vast sum of money; the schools that could be built, the wants that could be supplied. Think of the homes it would build, the children it would clothe.

"If we wish to do away with war, we must provide for the settlement of national differences by an international court. This court should be in perpetual session; its members should be selected by the various governments to be affected by its decisions, and, at the command and disposal of this court, the rest of Christendom being disarmed, there should be a military force sufficient to carry its judgments into effect. There should be no other excuse, no other business for an army or a navy in the civilized world." (iv 124)

Another great waste of energy and wealth which Ingersoll would have man avoid is indicated in the following:—

"Man should cease to expect any aid from any supernatural source, By this time he should be satisfied that worship has not created wealth. and that prosperity is not the child of prayer. He should know that the supernatural has not succored the oppressed, clothed the naked, fed the hungry, shielded the innocent, stayed the pestilence, or freed the slave." (iv 123)

That is to say, man should stop giving to the unknown and unknowable the product of his toil.

The vast river of glittering gold which, like a Niagara, ceaselessly pours into the abyss of ignorance, should be diverted into channels of enlightenment and utility.

From the enormous properties and expenditures of denominational Christendom,—the value of the first, in our own country (in 1896), being "at least one thousand million dollars," and the last, with interest, amounting to about two million dollars a week, or five hundred dollars a minute, during every working-day of ten hours,—"the returns," Ingersoll points out, "are remarkably small. The good accomplished does not appear to be great. There is no great diminution in crime. The decrease of immorality and poverty is hardly perceptible." (iv 128) He would therefore apply, with the view of reducing this expenditure to the minimum, the principle of amalgamation, of centralization. He says :—

"In many of our small towns—towns of three or four thousand people—will be found four or five churches, sometimes more. *These churches are founded upon immaterial differences* * * *.[1]

"Now, it seems to me that it would be far better for the people of a town, having a population of four or five thousand, to have one church, and the edifice should be of use, not only on Sunday, but on every day of the week. In this building should be the library of the town. It should be the clubhouse of the people, where they could find the principal newspapers and periodicals of the world. Its auditorium should be like a theater. Plays should be presented by home talent; an orchestra formed, music cultivated. The people should meet there at any time they desire. The women could carry their

[1] The italics are mine.

knitting and sewing; and connected with it should be rooms for the playing of games, billiards, cards, and chess. Everything should be made as agreeable as possible. The citizens should take pride in this building. They should adorn its niches with statues and its walls with pictures. It should be the intellectual center. They could employ a gentleman of ability, possibly of genius, to address them on Sundays, on subjects that would be of real interest, of real importance. They could say to this minister:

"'We are engaged in business during the week; while we are working at our trades and professions, we want you to study, and on Sunday tell us what you have found out.'

"* * * Let them have a Sunday-school in which the children shall be made acquainted with the facts of nature; with botany, entomology, something of geology and astronomy.

"Let them be made familiar with the greatest of poems, the finest paragraphs of literature, with stories of the heroic, the self-denying and generous.

"Now, it seems to me that such a congregation in a few years would become the most intelligent people in the United States." (iv 128)

Thus would he not only conserve the wealth and the energy of Christendom: he would divert them into channels of enlightenment and utility. He would employ them in seeking the aid of the natural,—in real education and real morality,—in obtaining happiness, well-being, here and now.

Another positive and constructive reform which he advocated for many years, and which is even more important than either of the two preceding, is here logically presentable. Knowing that "the home is the unit of the nation"; that "if we are to change the conduct of men, we must change their conditions"; that "the virtues grow about

the holy hearth of home," he would employ every practicable means for the security of the latter—every practicable means "to keep this from being a nation of tenants." "I want, if possible," he says, "to get the people out of the tenements, out of the gutters of degradation, to homes where there can be privacy, where these people can feel that they are in partnership with nature; that they have an interest in good government." (iv 137) To this end he continues:—

> "I would exempt a homestead of a reasonable value, say of the value of two or three thousand dollars," (iv 138) "not only from levy and sale, but from every kind of taxation, State and National—so that these poor people would feel * * * that some of the land was absolutely theirs, and that no one could drive them from their home—so that mothers could feel secure. If the home increased in value, and exceeded the limit, then taxes could be paid on the excess [it being one of Ingersoll's economic doctrines that those who are best able should bear the expenses of government]; and if the home were sold, I would have the money realized exempt for a certain time in order that the family should have the privilege of buying another home." (xi 160)

Not only would he thus secure and protect existing homes; he would endeavor to increase their number, through the instrumentality of what is known as "the right of eminent domain." This is already invoked by governments and corporations whenever it is believed to be for the public good. Ingersoll would extend the same right to every individual who desired to build a home, and who had met with the refusal of sufficient or suitable land for the purpose, providing, of course,

such individual possessed the necessary means with which to purchase. In this connection, he would fix the amount of land that a single owner might hold in exemption from the right of the home-builder:—

"Let me suppose that the amount of land that may be held by a farmer for cultivation has been fixed at one hundred and sixty acres —and suppose that A has several thousand acres. B wishes to buy one hundred and sixty acres or less of this land, for the purpose of making himself a home. A refuses to sell. Now, I believe that the law should be so that B can invoke this right of eminent domain, and file his petition, have the case brought before a jury, or before commissioners, who shall hear the evidence and determine the value, and on the payment of the amount the land shall belong to B.

"I would extend the same law to lots and houses in cities and villages. * * * " (xi 160)

While, therefore, Ingersoll would take no property, even in the interest of the fireside, without just compensation, he felt it to be a principle of humanity, that no one should be allowed to hold more land than he could use.—

"We need not repeat the failures of the old world. To divide lands among successful generals, or among favorites of the crown, to give vast estates for services rendered in war, is no worse than to allow men of great wealth to purchase and hold vast tracts of land." (xi 159)

He believed that "those who cultivate the land should own it," and that the babe of to-day should not be compelled to beg of the babe of yesterday the privilege of tilling the soil. Here, again, he appiled the doctrine so often asserted elsewhere,

that "every child should be sincerely welcomed." He said:—

> "Nature invites into this world every babe that is born. And what would you think of me, for instance, to-night, if I had invited you here—nobody had charged you anything, but you had been invited—and when you got here you had found one man pretending to occupy a hundred seats, another fifty, and another seventy-five, and thereupon you were compelled to stand up—what would you think of the invitation?" (iv 223)

And in so saying, he also applied, in a characteristic way, those distinctively Ingersollian ideas of liberty and justice to which attention has already been called.

Not less significant than what has anywhere preceded were his ideas of education:—

> "Real education is the hope of the future. The development of the brain, the civilization of the heart, will drive want and crime from the world. The schoolhouse is the real cathedral, and science the only possible savior of the human race. Education, real education, is the friend of honesty, of morality, of temperance." (iv 151)

Should we place in two groups Ingersoll's ideas of the school, the one group representing what should, the other what should not be taught, we should again find, to the surprise of those who are fond of regarding him as 'merely negative,' that he was capable of some very positive ideas. Indeed, we should find that he expressed a dozen positive ideas to one negative,—positive ideas which, moreover, seem very hard to confute.

According to him, there should prevail in the

school the spirit of absolute honesty and of perfect liberty. "Nothing should be taught in any school that the teacher does not know. Beliefs, superstitions, theories, should not be treated like demonstrated facts." (iv 150) Children should not be browbeaten by authority. They should be allowed to grow mentally, as well as physically. If they attempt to leave the intellectual cradle, they should not be beaten back with the bones of the dead. "What I insist upon," he says, "is that children should not be poisoned—should not be taken advantage of—that they should be treated fairly, honestly—that they should be allowed to develop from the inside instead of being crammed from the outside—that they should be taught to reason, not to believe—to think, to investigate and to use their senses, their minds." (xi 533) They should be taught that nature is the only possible authority; that they should therefore put to her the question, and trust implicitly her answer. "All should be taught that there is nothing too sacred to be investigated—too holy to be understood. Each mind has the right to lift all curtains, withdraw all veils, scale all walls, explore all recesses, all heights, all depths for itself, in spite of church or priest, or creed or book." (iv 107)

Although the school-house was Ingersoll's cathedral, and was reverenced by him as devoutly as the cathedral of worship is reverenced by communi-

cants, there were in the popular gospel of education many features far from his ideal. Nor did the shortcomings and deficiencies here implied have any necessary connection with theology. They were quite apart from those ideas and practices to which he has just been shown to have vigorously objected.

Ingersoll insisted that every child should be so trained as ultimately to be capable of self-support. This would, at the same time, make him capable of self-respect. Our reformer had little sympathy with the old idea (by no means yet extinct!), that the educated should work only with their heads. He could not countenance the false and ignoble standard of those who, ashamed of honest toil,—of felling forests, ploughing fields, gathering grain, —prefer "the garret and the precarious existence of an unappreciated poet, borrowing their money from their friends, and their ideas from the dead." (xi 161) To do away with such classes, he would make education real—the unified and harmonious training of all the faculties. He would not, as is now so often done, train the brain without the hands, and the hands without the brain. He would teach the child to mingle thought with labor, mind with muscle,—to use the hands in perfect unison with the head,—and thus equip their owner for self-support. He believed that any training which failed to accomplish this was unworthy of the name education. So far as the

welfare of the child was concerned, education was usefulness. One idea practically applied was worth a thousand that merely made motions in the brain. He deplored the fact, that, in lieu of an educational system conducted on these general lines,—founded on the basic idea of utility,—we have a system much of whose teaching "simply unfits men successfully to fight the battle of life." "Thousands," he said, "are to-day studying things that will be of exceedingly little importance to them or to others." (xi 161) He declared that many priceless years are wasted in filling the minds of students with the dates of great battles, and the names of kings; in the acquisition of languages that long ago were dead; and in "the study of history which, for the most part, is a detailed account of things that never occurred." All this, in his opinion, should be changed:—

"In all the schools children should be taught to work in wood and iron, to understand the construction and use of machinery, to become acquainted with the great forces that man is using to do his work. The present system of education teaches names, not things. It is as though we should spend years in learning the names of cards, without playing a game.

"In this way boys would learn their aptitudes—would ascertain what they were fitted for—what they could do. It would not be a guess, or an experiment, but a demonstration. Education should increase a boy's chances for getting a living. The real good of it is to get food and roof and raiment, opportunity to develop the mind and the body and live a full and ample life." (xi 162)

It hardly seems necessary to explain, that, not-

withstanding Ingersoll's belief in "real education," he was far from deprecating the so-called "higher education." For, as elsewhere stated, it was one of his most earnest contentions, that the horizon of the student should be bounded by none but nature, —by the student's own capacity for intellectual achievement or artistic production. What Ingersoll would do, under present social conditions, would be to make "higher education" secondary to the capacity for self-support. He would have every human being taught, "that his first duty is to take care of himself"; that, just as he "would shun death," just so should he "avoid being a burden on others." With Ingersoll, therefore, the question was, primarily, economic,—ethical; secondarily, esthetic. His quarrel with the classics was wholly conditional. He had no objection to pupils' learning the odes of Pindar and Horace, if the simple songs of industry were learned first; but he did think it better to be able to sing the songs of industry joyously and well under the open sky, or even in a factory, than to garble the odes of Pindar in a penitentiary, or the odes of Horace in an almshouse.

From these views of "real education," by means of which Ingersoll proposed to "drive want and crime from the world," we naturally pass to his views of want and crime themselves. And here, we fancy, a surprise may be in store for some. Indeed, what would be the surprise of, we will say,

an orthodox clergyman, who, having come to look, as though intuitively, with mingled pity and disdain, upon Ingersoll and his work, should suddenly meet with the following passage?—

"I sympathize with the wanderers; with the vagrants out of employment; even with the sad and weary men who are seeking bread but not work. When I see one of these men, poor and friendless—no matter how bad he is—I think that somebody loved him once; that he was once held in the arms of a mother; that he slept beneath her loving eyes, and wakened in the light of her smile. I see him in the cradle, listening to lullabies sung soft and low, and his little face is dimpled as though touched by the rosy fingers of Joy. And then I think of the strange and winding paths, the weary roads he has traveled, from that mother's arms to misery and want and aimless crime." (*Prose-Poems and Selections*, p. 168)

The truth is,—however anomalous,—that Ingersoll was the one man of his day who consistently and insistently advocated in sociology in general, and in criminology and penology in particular, all that is highest, noblest, and tenderest in the teachings of Christ. While Christian governors, legislators, reformers, philanthropists, humanitarians, and theologians, shocked by what they termed his "infidel blasphemies," were advocating, as a remedy for crime, the Mosaic doctrine of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth"—the doctrine of revenge, degradation, and hate—Ingersoll was, in effect, repeating the marvelous words of "the Savior," "Let him that is without sin cast the first stone." Indeed, Ingersoll was perhaps even more exacting than this concerning the moral fitness of the

would-be judges and executioners; for he once said to an audience:—

> "The next time you look with scorn upon a convict, let me beg of you to do one thing. Maybe you are not as bad as I am, but do one thing: think of all the crimes you have wanted to commit; think of all the crimes you would have committed if you had had the opportunity; think of all the temptations to which you would have yielded had nobody been looking; and then put your hand on your heart and say whether you can justly look with contempt even upon a convict." (iv 231)

As Ingersoll himself remarked of Whitman, "he sympathized with the imprisoned and despised, and even on the brow of crime he was great enough to place the kiss of human sympathy." That is, Ingersoll was (and, too, by self-confession) a sentimentalist. But his sentiment was not maudlin: it was mingled with the highest intelligence. For here, again, "his brain took counsel of his heart." It is more accurate to say, that his heart took counsel of his brain, since, as a matter of fact, all his sympathies, however ardent, were supported by the firmest of intellectual convictions. Such sympathies, I repeat, are not maudlin. There is, to be sure, a sympathy that is nothing more than maudlin; but the sympathy that extends to the lowest wretch a pardon born of the keenest intellectual perception,—the profoundest conviction,—of his blamelessness as a victim of uncontrollable conditions,—of inexorable forces,—is the most exalted of which we can conceive, and robes its possessor

in moral grandeur. Such was the sympathy of Ingersoll.

His cardinal opinions and teachings concerning the criminal were based upon the belief that every individual, good or bad, invariably does precisely as he or she *must* do. He never wandered far into the maze of metaphysics in search of a foundation for that belief: rather did he seek and find such foundation in physical science, particularly in physiological psychology. Without undertaking, therefore, a lengthy journey in the realm of metaphysics, or even in that of psychology, but without hesitating to enter, if need be, the realms of both, let us endeavor to understand his position.

As elsewhere stated, Ingersoll accepted the great fundamental truths of physical science, drawing therefrom such inferences, and only such, as accorded with reason and logic. He believed in nature—that this universe of substance and energy —indestructible, uncreated, eternal—infinite in both time and space—this universe of which humanity is a part—is all there is. He believed that all is natural and necessary—necessarily natural, naturally necessary—that the necessarily natural and the naturally necessary are naturally and necessarily all. He believed that by no possibility could even a single infinitesimal atom have been non-existent or otherwise than as it is; that, from this infinitesimal atom to the largest planet, every part of the universe, including, of course, all sen-

tient beings, is in the grasp of immutable force; that every atom, itself a necessity, constantly and necessarily acts upon, and is constantly and necessarily acted upon by, every other atom. He believed that precisely the same is true of every aggregation of atoms—of every man—that it is true of the human brain. The fact that the brain was apparently distinguished from all other masses of matter, by the possession of what is called consciousness, did not alter the case. The circumstance that the brain could cognize its being acted upon, and its own action, was of no moment. The cognizing faculty was not itself a potency behind the phenomena cognized: it was an impotent, if deeply interested, witness on this side of the phenomena. It was not as the sunlight that made the coal, as the coal itself burning under the boiler, as the steam moving the pistons, nor even as the engineer in the cab, pulling the throttle: it was as the man who stands beside the track and watches the train go by. A closer parallel: If the man boards the train, and it moves in the direction he desires or "wills" to go, and he observes and says that it so moves, he does not thereby change the source or the nature of the force that moves the train—that moves himself: he merely establishes the fact that he boarded a train moving in the direction he desired or "willed" to go. The question still is, What caused him to desire or "will" to take the train,—to move in that direction? Could he, by

any possibility, have desired or "willed" to move in another direction? Realizing the immutability of forces and conditions, Ingersoll believed that the man could not. He believed that to assert the contrary was to deny causation, the universality of force, the integrity of nature. He believed that if the man could have desired or "willed" to move in another direction, he necessarily would have done so. "All that has been possible has happened, all that is possible is happening, and all that will be possible will happen." Therefore, man does as he *must* do, regardless of what (in the rightful or wrongful judgment of others) he *should* do. In other words, Ingersoll could readily conceive of an individual's doing as he *should* and *must*, or as he *should not, but must;* but by no possibility could he conceive of one's doing as he *should not and must not.* Hence, in his opinion, all alleged acts of "willing," or volition, amount, on analysis, to no more than this: consciousness of agreeable action. The real cause of the "willing," or volition,—the *vis a tergo* of the action,—instead of being our servant, was our master; and "free will" and "free moral agency" were simply expressions of philosophical and theological ignorance.

In refutation of the argument for "free moral agency," Ingersoll once used the following illustration,—itself an argument as clear as it is unanswerable:—

"It is insisted that man is free, and is responsible, because he knows right from wrong. But the compass does not navigate the ship; neither does it in any way, of itself, determine the direction that is taken. When winds and waves are too powerful, the compass is of no importance. The pilot may read it correctly, and may know the direction the ship ought to take, but the compass is not a force. So men, blown by the tempests of passion, may have the intellectual conviction that they should go another way; but of what use, of what force, is the conviction?" (*Prose-Poems and Selections*, p. 125)

Asked for his opinion concerning the moral and legal responsibility of the alcoholic, he said:—

"Personally, I regard the moral and legal responsibility of all persons as being exactly the same. * * *

"We are beginning to find that there is no effect without a cause, and that the conduct of individuals is not an exception to this law. Every hope, every fear, every dream, every virtue, every crime, has behind it an efficient cause. Men do neither right nor wrong by chance. * * *

* * * * * * * *

"* * * Believing as I do that all persons act as they must, it makes not the slightest difference whether the person so acting is what we call inebriated, or sane, or insane—he acts as he must." (viii 502)

In reaching this necessitarian conclusion, Ingersoll, true to his philosophic nature, gave, of course, due consideration to all the facts, forces, and conditions affecting human conduct,—to heredity, the form, size, and quality of the brain, bodily health, environment, example, education. It was perfectly plain to him that A, having a certain brain, and being placed in a certain environment, would necessarily act in a certain way; that B, in precisely the same environment, would necessarily act in another

way; and that either A or B, in a different environment, would necessarily act in still other ways. Whether their acts might be good or bad, they would be as necessary as any other phenomena in nature—as absolutely necessary and inevitable as the reflection of light from an opaque body—the form of a snowflake—the motions of a planet.

In the production of that bountiful crop called crime, nature, in Ingersoll's opinion, ploughs the ground, sows the seeds, cultivates, waters, husbands, and harvests with as much skill as the most competent farmer in the production of wheat or corn. Indeed, it seemed almost as though nature sometimes resorts to irrigation and artificial rain in raising failures. And why did nature raise failures? Simply because, contrary to the wholly assumptive teachings of philosophers and theologians, nature was without design, object, or purpose—because she was deaf, dumb, and blind with reference to man. She produced a literal "Bluebeard" with the same satisfaction that she did a Florence Nightingale; that is, with none. In other words, the most devilish of men, like the most saintly of women, was a natural and necessary product; and all of his acts, under the conditions and circumstances of his environment, were natural and necessary acts.

But Ingersoll did not stop here. A true reformer, a wise moral physician, he was not content merely with having indicated the nature of the malady—

with a skilful diagnosis: he turned his attention to treatment, both preventive and curative.

Let us consider first the preventive treatment which he proposed. After pointing to the well-known fact, that, for thousands of years, men and women had sought in various ways to reform mankind; that they had "created gods and devils, heavens and hells"; had "tortured and imprisoned, flayed alive and burned"; had preached and taught and coaxed without result, he asked, "Why have the reformers failed?" And he answered:—

"* * * I will tell them why.

"Ignorance, poverty and vice are populating the world. The gutter is a nursery. People unable even to support themselves fill the tenements, the huts and hovels with children. They depend on the Lord, on luck and charity. They are not intelligent enough to think about consequences or to feel responsibility. At the same time they do not want children, because a child is a curse, a curse to them and to itself. The babe is not welcome, because it is a burden. These unwelcome children fill the jails and prisons, the asylums and hospitals, and they crowd the scaffolds. A few are rescued by chance or charity, but the great majority are failures. They become vicious, ferocious. They live by fraud and violence, and bequeath their vices to their children." (iv 502)

He then continued:—

"The real question is, can we prevent the ignorant, the poor, the vicious, from filling the world with their children?

"Can we prevent this Missouri of ignorance and vice from emptying into the Mississippi of civilization?" (iv 503)

And without waiting for an answer, he himself declared:—

"To accomplish this there is but one way. Science must make woman the owner, the mistress of herself. Science, the only possible savior of mankind, must put it in the power of woman to decide for herself whether she will or will not become a mother.

"This is the solution of the whole question. This frees woman. The babes that are then born will be welcome. They will be clasped with glad hands to happy breasts. They will fill homes with light and joy." (iv 505)

Loath as most professional reformers would be to acknowledge the wisdom of advice so radical, it would seem to require much less of the poetic faculty than its giver displays in its expression to picture in one's mind the mental, moral, and physical benefits which society would realize from its acceptance.

Several other definite reforms which were advocated by Ingersoll, and which would necessarily tend to the prevention of crime, should here be recalled or mentioned. They are: The abolition of war, both within and between nations, war being a perpetual excuse for mobs and individual violence; the enactment of legislation favorable to an increase of the number of home-builders and home-owners, thereby decreasing the number of tenants; the instituting of a public educational curriculum whose first aim should be to make every pupil ultimately capable of self-support (all of these having been presented in the present chapter); the rearing of children with affection, reason, and justice (to be treated of in Chapter XVI); and the repeal or modification of the absurd, unjust, and immoral

statutes and laws which, in many states, restrict or withhold the natural right to divorce.[1]

Passing now from Ingersoll's suggestions for preventing the production of criminals, let us glance at his suggestions for the treatment of criminals already existing.

In his opinion, society possessed one right, and was morally charged with one duty, with reference to this class: It was society's undeniable right to protect itself; it was its unmistakable duty to reform the criminal if possible. As the exercise of this right and the performance of this duty must proceed conjointly, must alike involve, in most cases, the restriction of the liberties of the wrong-doer, it will be understood that that which follows relates to the treatment of the convict in penitentiaries and prisons.

First, as to confinement itself, Ingersoll would give to the convict every liberty consistent with achieving the purpose for which the convict was confined—the safety of society. And why? Because society had no moral right to deprive any individual of more of his liberties than was absolutely necessary for the preservation of its own.

Second, as to the treatment of the confined, Ingersoll advocated, as we should naturally expect, some very radical and revolutionary methods. And yet he advocated nothing impracticable,

[1] For Ingersoll's views of this subject, the reader must, for spacial reasons, be referred to the former's own works.

nothing that could not be put into effect at once, if society but had the wisdom and the goodness to do so. As the only object of confinement, other than the protection of society, was the reformation of the convict, there should be absolutely no punishment. And why? Because experience had demonstrated that punishment was a failure, both as a deterrent and as a reforming force. No punishment that ingenious cruelty had ever devised was great enough,—terrible enough,—either to prevent crime or to reform the criminal. Therefore, its infliction,—the infliction of useless pain and suffering,—was itself a crime as great, in many cases, as the crime of the convict himself. His may have been a crime of passion: this was a crime of deliberation, of calculating cruelty—cruelty for cruelty's sake. Ingersoll believed that its effect was to harden and degrade not only the convict, but the person, the institution, the state, the society that inflicted the punishment; that it was itself a potent influence for crime. Was it not an example set by society and the state? If the individual should not follow them, whom or what should he follow? In Ingersoll's opinion, society was without right to place upon one of its members an additional stain. The convict should suffer no degradation that he did not (apparently) put upon himself. There should be manifested toward him no heartless air of superiority. There should be no exhibition of arbitrary power. The lion of

authority should not needlessly stalk before the cur of obedience. But of all of Ingersoll's objections to punishment proper, the most profound is this :—

" * * * I am opposed to any punishment that cannot be inflicted by a gentleman * * *." (viii 378)

This is the final word. If the state required that all of its punishments should be inflicted by gentlemen, no punishment *per se* would be inflicted; because no gentleman would knowingly cause useless suffering.

Every penitentiary and prison, in Ingersoll's opinion, should be a real reformatory. Only the noblest, the wisest, and the best should be in charge. All officials and employees, from the warden to the lowest in authority, should be filled with enthusiasm for humanity. They should be such as have shown as much genius for virtue as the criminal has shown for vice. They should be of the precious few who, having steadfastly gazed in the mirror of conscience, have never felt the impulse to "cast the first stone." They should be selected with as great care as are physicians who are to be placed in charge of hospitals and asylums, and with precisely the same object,—to cure the inmates if possible. These officials should employ their superior intelligence and virtue in elevating their moral and intellectual inferiors; or rather, they should be so intelligent and virtuous that

they could not refrain from so doing. The penitentiary should be a mental and moral almshouse,—a laboratory in which humanitarians, with the zeal of discovery, would seek in every heart the seeds of good. From the moment of his entrance, the convict should be made to realize, if possible, that the government was his friend; that its only object, beyond the protection of society, was to make him a better man, mentally, morally, and physically. Those in charge should address themselves to his brain and to his heart. Knowing that, in the pursuit of happiness, the common goal of humanity, every man takes what he thinks is the easiest road, and that the convict simply has made a mistake,—has taken the wrong road,—they should try to convince him of his mistake, and to place him, with intelligence and sympathy, in the right road. He should be instructed in the science and art of conduct. He should be taught that only the self-supporting can be self-respecting, and that the self-respecting has taken at least the first step toward real happiness and well-being.

But if Ingersoll would teach convicts the necessity of honest labor, he would not, with the next breath, teach them that the product of their labor belonged to others,—to the state. He was wise enough to know that convicts on entering the penitentiary lost no right which had really been theirs on the outside. One of their rights on the outside was to receive the market value of their

labor. He therefore insisted that the convict should be credited with what he earned, minus the cost of his maintenance. "He should neither be degraded nor robbed. The state should set the highest and noblest example," said Ingersoll. He could not see the social or economic wisdom of robbing, or of keeping in idleness, the married convicts while their wives and children shivered and hungered in tenement or poorhouse. He would send the earnings to the families. With reference to convicts that had no families, he asked:—

"Would it not be far better * * * to lay aside their earnings from day to day, from month to month, and from year to year—to put this money at interest, so that when the convict is released after five years of imprisonment he will have several hundred dollars of his own—not merely money enough to pay his way back to the place from which he was sent, but enough to make it possible for him to commence business on his own account, enough to keep the wolf of crime from the door of his heart?

"Suppose the convict comes out with five hundred dollars. This would be to most of that class a fortune. It would form a breastwork, a fortress, behind which the man could fight temptation. This would give him food and raiment, enable him to go to some other State or country where he could redeem himself. If this were done, thousands of convicts would feel under immense obligation to the Government. They would think of the penitentiary as the place in which they were saved—in which they were redeemed—and they would feel that the verdict of guilty rescued them from the abyss of crime. Under these circumstances, the law would appear beneficent, and the heart of the poor convict, instead of being filled with malice, would overflow with gratitude." (xi 155)

Nor were convicts and their immediate families, as Ingersoll pointed out, the only ones to suffer

because of the state's withholding the just wages of those who labor for it:—

As "the men in the penitentiaries do not work for themselves"; as "they have no interest in their toil—no reason for doing the best they can— * * * the * * * product of their labor is poor. This product comes in competition with the work of mechanics, honest men, who have families to support, and the cry is that convict labor takes the bread from the mouths of virtuous people." (xi 155) "If the convict worked for himself, he would do the best he could, and the wares produced in the penitentiaries would not cheapen the labor of other men." (xi 156)

Ingersoll knew that if these "other men" were in fact "honest men,"—if, with him, they believed in universal justice,—they could not possibly object to paying for his toil a man whom nature, the mother of us all, had made less honest and virtuous than themselves.

To capital punishment, Ingersoll offered precisely the same objections that he did to punishment of every other kind, and at least two more objections. Briefly, the first of these,—based upon a profound knowledge of human nature and the law, and upon long technical legal experience,—was:—

"The tendency of the extreme penalty is to prevent conviction. In the presence of death it is easy for a jury to find a doubt. * * * If the penalty were imprisonment for life, the jury would feel that if any mistake were made it could be rectified; but where the penalty is death a mistake is fatal. A conscientious man takes into consideration the defects of human nature—the uncertainty of testimony, and the countless shadows that dim and darken the understanding, and refuses to find a verdict that, if wrong, cannot be righted." (xi 157)

The second objection was :—

"The death penalty, inflicted by the Government, is a perpetual excuse for mobs.

"The greatest danger in a Republic is a mob, and as long as States inflict the penalty of death, mobs will follow the example. If the State does not consider life sacred, the mob, with ready rope, will strangle the suspected. The mob will say: 'The only difference is in the trial; the State does the same—we know the man is guilty—why should time be wasted in technicalities?' In other words, why may not the mob do quickly that which the State does slowly?" (xi 157)

It would seem that any doubt of the wisdom of this objection might be dispelled by perusing the dispatches which almost daily appear in our public press.

And after advocating not only the preceding, but many other equally positive and constructive measures, the consideration of which would lead us far beyond the limits of the present volume, Ingersoll said :—

"The reforms that I have mentioned cannot be accomplished in a day, possibly not for many centuries; and in the meantime there is much crime, much poverty, much want, and consequently something must be done now.

"Let each human being, within the limits of the possible be self-supporting; let every one take intelligent thought for the morrow; and if a human being supports himself and acquires a surplus, let him use a part of that surplus for the unfortunate; and let each one to the extent of his ability help his fellow-men. Let him do what he can in the circle of his own acquaintance to rescue the fallen, to help those who are trying to help themselves, to give work to the idle. Let him distribute kind words, words of wisdom, of cheerfulness and hope. In other words, let every human being do all the good he can,

and let him bind up the wounds of his fellow-creatures, and at the same time put forth every effort to hasten the coming of a better day.

"This, in my judgment, is real religion. To do all the good you can is to be a saint in the highest and in the noblest sense. To do all the good you can; this is to be really and truly spiritual. To relieve suffering, to put the star of hope in the midnight of despair, this is true holiness. This is the religion of science." (iv 155)

It would be impossible to close this chapter with more fitting and illuminating words than the ones with which Ingersoll himself painted on a fadeless canvas the past, the present, and the future. But in adapting those words to my purpose, I wish to invite attention to two facts which they indisputably prove: First, that even the orthodox Christian of to-day is an iconoclast; second, that it was absolutely necessary for Ingersoll to be a far more advanced one, if he would be a true reformer,—if he would hasten the coming of that ideal state for which he so devotedly, so heroically labored, and which he so hopefully, so incomparably, so gloriously predicted:—

"I look. In gloomy caves I see the sacred serpents coiled, waiting for their sacrificial prey. I see their open jaws, their restless tongues, their glittering eyes, their cruel fangs. I see them seize and crush, in many horrid folds, the helpless children given by mothers to appease the Serpent-God.

"I look again. I see temples wrought of stone and gilded with barbaric gold. I see altars red with human blood. I see the solemn priests thrust knives in the white breasts of girls.

"I look again. I see other temples and other altars, where greedy flames devour the flesh and blood of babes. I see other temples and other priests and other altars dripping with the blood of oxen, lambs,

and doves. I see other temples and other priests and other altars, on which are sacrificed the liberties of man. I look: I see the cathedrals of God, the huts of peasants; the robes of kings, the rags of honest men.

"I see a world at war—the lovers of God are the haters of men. I see dungeons filled with the noblest and the best. I see exiles, wanderers, outcasts—millions of martyrs, widows, and orphans. I see the cunning instruments of torture, and hear again the shrieks and sobs and moans of millions dead. I see the prison's gloom, the fagot's flame. I see a world beneath the feet of priests; Liberty in chains; every virtue a crime, every crime a virtue; the white forehead of honor wearing the brand of shame; intelligence despised, stupidity sainted, hypocrisy crowned; and bending above the poor earth, religion's night without a star. This was.

"I look again, and in the East of Hope, the first pale light shed by the herald star gives promise of another dawn. I look, and from the ashes, blood, and tears, the countless heroes leap to bless the future and avenge the past. I see a world at war, and in the storm and chaos of the deadly strife thrones crumble, altars fall, chains break, creeds change. The highest peaks are touched with holy light. The dawn has blossomed. It is Day.

"I look. I see discoverers sailing mysterious seas. I see inventors cunningly enslave the blind forces of the world. Schools are built, teachers slowly take the place of priests. Philosophers arise. Thinkers give the world their wealth of brain, and lips grow rich with words of truth. This is.

"I look again. The popes and priests and kings are gone. The altars and the thrones have mingled with the dust. The aristocracy of land and cloud have perished from the earth and air. The gods are dead. A new religion sheds its glory on mankind. It is the gospel of this world, the religion of the body, the evangel of health and joy. I see a world at peace, a world where labor reaps its true reward. A world without prisons, without workhouses, without asylums—a world on which the gibbet's shadow does not fall; a world where the poor girl, trying to win bread with the needle—the needle that has been called "the asp for the breast of the poor"—is not driven to the desperate choice of crime or death, of suicide or shame. I see a world without the beggar's outstretched palm, the miser's heartless, stony stare, the piteous wail of want, the pallid face of crime, the livid lips of lies, the cruel eyes of scorn. I see a race

without disease of flesh or brain—shapely and fair, the married harmony of form and function.

"And as I look, Life lengthens, Joy deepens, Love intensifies, Fear dies,—Liberty at last is God, and Heaven is here. This shall be." (*Prose-Poems and Selections*, p. 157)

CHAPTER XIII.

WAS HE 'A MERE ICONOCLAST'?

(*continued*)

Were His Teachings Inimical to Law and Morality?

ONE OF the most serious features of the general charge of iconoclasm which has been preferred by the critics of Ingersoll is the implication that the adoption of his teachings would destroy the social fabric. All essential ideas in the countless laws which have been formulated for the government of modern society, they say, sprang from the Mosaic code, and to discredit the book of which that code is a part would consequently plunge civilization into anarchy.

Probably a majority of Ingersoll's critics will admit, whatever their opinion as to the breadth and depth of his biblical scholarship, that his knowledge of jurisprudence was both wide and profound, and that, therefore, if there ever was a criticism to which he was peculiarly fitted to reply, it is the one in question. He says:—

"It has been contended for many years that the Ten Command-

ments are the foundation of all ideas of justice and of law. Eminent jurists have bowed to popular prejudice, and deformed their works by statements to the effect that the Mosaic laws are the fountains from which sprang all ideas of right and wrong. Nothing can be more stupidly false than such assertions. Thousands of years before Moses was born, the Egyptians had a code of laws. They had laws against blasphemy, murder, adultery, larceny, perjury, laws for the collection of debts, the enforcement of contracts, the ascertainment of damages, the redemption of property pawned, and upon nearly every subject of human interest. The Egyptian code was far better than the Mosaic.

"Laws spring from the instinct of self-preservation. Industry objected to supporting idleness, and laws were made against theft. Laws were made against murder, because a very large majority of the people have always objected to being murdered. All fundamental laws were born simply of the instinct of self-defense. Long before the Jewish savages assembled at the foot of Sinai, laws had been made and enforced, not only in Egypt and India, but by every tribe that ever existed." (ii 234)

It would be both interesting and instructive to dwell upon Ingersoll's views of the foundations of modern jurisprudence, but it is far more vital, considering the nature of the criticism here concerned, that we devote the space involved to the presentation of his opinions and teachings regarding a different subject,—a subject to which, however, jurisprudence itself is closely related.

It has often been asserted by his critics, that his teachings are, in the ultimate, antisocial and perverse, and that, therefore, their universal acceptance would blot out of the mind all notion of true ethics, and leave mankind without a moral standard. I shall examine this criticism somewhat at length, placing his ethical ideas in sharp contrast with

those of his opponents, thus enabling us to ascertain the truth.

Now, broadly speaking, just as there are in all other branches of philosophy two directly opposed classes of thinkers,—on the one side, the monists, who believe that the universe is the natural, necessary, and eternal *all*, and, on the other side, the dualists, who believe that back of the universe is the supernatural,—so in ethics, or morals, there are two classes.

With the dualistic school of moralists, which includes the theological critics of Ingersoll, an act is right or wrong according as it does or does not harmonize with the alleged command of a supernatural being, which command either wells up as human consciousness, or is found inscribed in some so-called sacred book, or both. This means that an act is absolutely right or absolutely wrong, regardless of its consequences; in other words, that absolute right and absolute wrong exist in themselves, just as the noumenon,—"the thing in itself,"—of the dualistic metaphysician is supposed to exist back of phenomena. It establishes a fiat in morals. It places ethical acts upon precisely the same artificial basis as civic acts. To-day it is lawful to throw refuse on to the street. To-morrow the governor signs a bill, and lo! the throwing of refuse on to the street is "unlawful." To-day, as far as we know, stealing is right. To-morrow we read in a book, "Thou shalt not steal," and lo!

stealing is absolutely wrong. Of course, if, as the theological moralists undeniably imply, stealing and certain other acts were made wrong by the commandments of Jehovah, it follows, as a necessarily unavoidable corollary, that those acts were right before, and that they would still be right had the commandments of Jehovah not been given. And this is only one side of the proposition. The assertion that a Supreme Being could by command make wrong that which before was right, necessarily and unavoidably implies that he could make right that which before was wrong. Nor is this all that is implied by dualistic theological morals.

If by the will or command of the Supreme Being certain acts were made either absolutely right or absolutely wrong, the fact of relativity, which applies in every other branch of thought, must be utterly ignored in ethics. If, for example, stealing is absolutely wrong, it is as great a crime to steal a grain of millet from the wealthiest man in the world as to steal the last penny from a helpless and homeless invalid. Indeed, we might make even more striking comparisons, since we are by no means logically limited to the comparison of acts of like nature. It is, I say, as great a crime, according to the dualistic theological critics of Ingersoll's ethics, to covet your neighbor's ox as to murder the happiest and most useful member of society. These, I urge, are not exaggerations but perfectly logical deductions from the premises

of the dualistic theological moralist. And precisely the same reasoning is conversely applicable to such acts of virtue as were sanctioned or commanded by Jehovah.

It is hardly necessary to point out, that the system of ethics, or morals, the cardinal principles of which I have indicated in this brief exposition is, in the ultimate analysis, based solely and absolutely upon belief in a First Cause, or Creator, and that, so far as the Jewish and both the Catholic and the Protestant theologians are concerned, the base of the system in question is still further narrowed to belief in the Old and the New Testaments. After what has previously been written in this work, I shall not discuss the tenability of that belief, but shall proceed, at once, to contrast with the moral system ultimately resting upon it the ethical ideas of the Great Agnostic.

In the first place, to the dogmatic assertion of the dualistic theological moralist, that all rational beings derive their knowledge of right and wrong from a superior being, Ingersoll would propose the relentlessly logical query: How, then, can the most superior being, that is, the very Supreme Being himself, be moral?

If, as all theologians assert, the most superior ("most superior" itself implies relativity) being of whom we can conceive is absolutely good, it follows, as a necessarily unavoidable corollary, that the most inferior ("most inferior" also implies

relativity) being of whom we can conceive is absolutely bad. But the most inferior being of whom we can conceive is not absolutely bad. Therefore, the first side of our proposition falls. To state the problem in a different way, we cannot conceive of absolute goodness unless we can conceive of absolute badness. We cannot conceive of absolute badness. Therefore, we cannot admit the absolute in morals —nothing absolutely good, nothing absolutely bad; nothing absolutely moral, nothing absolutely immoral. Both are alike inconceivable. "The absolute," says Ingersoll, "is beyond the human mind."

If, then, man did not derive from a being superior to himself, that is, from a supernatural being, his present knowledge of right and wrong,—of morality, —and if absolute right and absolute wrong, absolute morality and absolute immorality, are alike inconceivable, whence, according to Ingersoll, did man derive the knowledge in question? and what is man's standard of conduct? We will allow Ingersoll himself to answer this question, in a few sentences carefully collated from here and there in his works:—

"Morality is based upon the experience of mankind." (viii 149) "Man is a sentient being—he suffers and enjoys." (xii 60) "Happiness is the true end and aim of life." (ii 431) "Happiness is the only good." "By happiness is meant not simply the joy of eating and drinking—the gratification of the appetite—but good, well-being, in the highest and noblest forms." (ii 431) "In order to be happy * * * [man] must preserve the conditions of well-being —must

live in accordance with certain facts by which he is surrounded." (xii 60) "That which increases the sum of human happiness is moral; and that which diminishes the sum of human happiness is immoral." (xii 60) "All actions must be judged by their consequences, * * * and all consequences are learned from experience. After we have had a certain amount of experience, we then reason from analogy. We apply our logic and say that a certain course will bring destruction, another course will bring happiness." (viii 149) "There is in the moral world, as in the physical, the absolute and perfect relation of cause and effect." (*Prose-Poems and Selections*, p. 210) "If consequences are good, so is the action. If actions had no consequences, they would be neither good nor bad." (*Prose-Poems and Selections*, p. 209) "So, the foundations of the moral and the immoral are in the nature of things—in the necessary relation between conduct and well-being, and an infinite God cannot change these foundations, and cannot increase or diminish the natural consequences of actions." (iii 428) "There is nothing inspired about morality—nothing supernatural." (viii 150) "The highest possible standard is human." (xii 61)

Ingersoll's insistence, with Mill, Spencer, and other philosophers, upon the soundness of utilitarian morals, as implied by the single phrase "the greatest happiness for the greatest number" —a phrase which made glorious the name of Jeremy Bentham—is perhaps best shown by the following paragraph :—

"Morality is capable of being demonstrated. You do not have to take the word of anybody; you can observe and examine for yourself. Larceny is the enemy of industry, and industry is good; therefore larceny is immoral. The family is the unit of good government; anything that tends to destroy the family is immoral. Honesty is the mother of confidence; it unites, combines and solidifies society. Dishonesty is disintegration; it destroys confidence; it brings social chaos; it is therefore immoral." (viii 150)

After this brief presentation, I cannot refrain

from quoting Ingersoll's comparison of the practical workings of the two ethical theories here concerned:—

"Christianity teaches that all offenses can be forgiven. Every church unconsciously allows people to commit crimes on a credit. I do not mean by this that any church consciously advocates immorality. I most cheerfully admit that thousands and thousands of ministers are endeavoring to do good—that they are pure, self-denying men, trying to make this world better. But there is a frightful defect in their philosophy. They say to the bank cashier: You must not steal, you must not take a dollar—larceny is wrong, it is contrary to all law, human and divine—but if you do steal every cent in the bank, God will as gladly, quickly forgive you in Canada as he will in the United States. On the other hand, what is called infidelity says: There is no being in the universe who rewards, and there is no being who punishes—every act has its consequences. If the act is good, the consequences are good; if the act is bad, the consequences are bad; and these consequences must be borne by the actor. It says to every human being: You must reap what you sow. There is no reward, there is no punishment, but there are consequences, and these consequences are the invisible and implacable police of nature. They cannot be avoided. They cannot be bribed. No power can awe them, and there is not gold enough in the world to make them pause. Even a God cannot induce them to release for one instant their victim.

"This great truth is, in my judgment, the gospel of morality. If all men knew that they must inevitably bear the consequences of their own actions—if they absolutely knew that they could not injure another without injuring themselves, the world, in my judgment, would be far better than it is." (vii 294)

Finally, the combined ultimate conclusions of all moralists, from Confucius to the present, amount to no more than this single epigram of Ingersoll:—

"Morality is the best thing to do under the circumstances."

CHAPTER XIV.

WAS HE 'A MERE ICONOCLAST'?

(*concluded*)

Did He Endeavor To Destroy the Hope of Immortality?

IN DEALING with the specific charges of iconoclasm that have been so insistently pressed by the theological indicters of Ingersoll, there yet remain to be considered his views of at least one other subject,—the immortality of the soul. Holding as they do so prominent and so essential a place in his life-work,—running like threads of gold through the very warp and woof of his philosophy,—their presentation is not merely desirable: it constitutes a task which no conscientious reviewer could avoid.

It is asserted by Ingersoll's critics, that his monistic and agnostic teachings, in general, and his rejection of supernatural purpose and design and the bodily resurrection and ascension of Christ, in particular, utterly destroy the hope of immortality, leaving mankind without the shadow of a consolation that the unspeakable wrongs of this life will be righted in another.

Now, clearly to understand Ingersoll's views concerning the immortality of the soul, that is, concerning the mind after the death of the body, it is first absolutely necessary to understand his views concerning the mind before the death of the body. What were they?

Reiterating so much only of his philosophy as is essential to a comprehensive presentation of the views in question, and avoiding the "double words" of the metaphysician and the psychologist, I may state that Ingersoll believed in what is called the natural; that the universe is the uncreated and indestructible, the infinite and eternal, *all*. Without pretending either to define or to distinguish them, he believed that this *all* consists of what are called substance and force. He did not believe that there is any power, force, or essence behind the universe, because, even to think of such power, force, or essence, he would have been necessitated to think of some form or phase of substance or force, that is, of some part or phase of the universe. In other words, he would have been necessitated to think of something as existing behind itself. This being impossible, the supernatural was excluded from his belief. Incapable of conceiving of anything but the natural, he believed that every phenomenon is a natural phenomenon. Though the original development of organic life from inorganic substance and force was to him an insoluble problem, he believed that, from the moner or some even more

simple protoplasmic mass, man, through countless ages, had evolved by a series of purely natural, interrelated chemical, physical, and psychological processes. He held that by no conceivable possibility could the human organism have become different from what it is. Confident that there was no more trustworthy informant concerning that organism, he accepted the conclusions of the representative biological and anthropological scientists of his day. He believed, for example, that, without what are termed the voluntary muscles, it would be absolutely impossible for an individual voluntarily to exert force; that, were it not for the heart and the rest of the circulatory mechanism, it would be impossible either to supply with food the several tissues of the body or to remove from them the various deleterious products of waste; that, in the absence of certain nerve-tissues, there would be no sensation. He was satisfied as to the inevitable and invariable functional integrity of these structures. He believed, that, between the highly specialized and widely differentiated tissues or organs just mentioned, there is no vicarious action; that voluntary motion is invariably effected through the muscles; circulation, through the heart; sensation, through the nerves. He was convinced that the quality and the degree of functional activity in the organs concerned depend absolutely and inevitably upon their own physiological condition, plus the conditions of their en-

vironment. In short, he believed that the organs of motion, circulation, and sensation naturally developed, under natural conditions, and are natural organs, acting in a natural way.

Did he believe to the contrary concerning any other organ—concerning the brain? In my judgment, there is no better way of initiating a reply to this question than by asking another—than by asking simply this: Could he?

To him, the brain was either natural or supernatural: it could not be both. It was either a purely natural organ, manifesting the purely natural phenomena called mind, or it was a purely supernatural organ, manifesting the purely supernatural phenomena called mind. Which of these would he declare it to be? Holding, as already indicated, that every other organ is purely natural, could he declare that the brain, chemically the most complex, and anatomically and physiologically the most wonderful, of all, is purely supernatural, manifesting purely supernatural phenomena?

He knew that the source and origin of thought had been removed by modern science from the maze of metaphysics to the domain of the physical, the natural. He knew, that, superseding the theories of such dualistic thinkers as Plato and Descartes, according to the last of whom the ego sat an inexorable autocrat on its throne in the pineal gland, we have a physicochemical mechanism within whose wondrous substance is an epitome of all the past

and a hint of all the future—an organ constantly reacting to external stimuli, like all other organs, and subject to the same immutable forces or conditions—an organ whose function is the production and manifestation of thought. And he knew, that, were there no such organ, there would be no thought, —just as he knew, that, were there no muscles, heart, nor nerves, there would be no motion, circulation, nor sensation. He knew, that, if this were not the case,—if that marvelous organ called the brain were merely a sort of play-ground for some "absolute" immaterial essence,—mental vigor would not increase directly (*pari passu*) with physiological vigor, as revealed by the scalpel and the microscope, nor wane like a fading flower with the progress of disease. He saw, that, if the brain be not the real and only source of mental phenomena, there is no reason why, when a part or all of its essential cells and fibers are destroyed by accident, experiment, disease, or age, the individual concerned should not continue to think with as much facility as he did before,—to think with some other organ,—with the spleen, for example.

Of course, Ingersoll was well aware that so-called scientists had produced many volumes to show, that, although a certain more or less definite connection between the mind and the brain must be admitted, there is no absolutely necessary and inevitable relation between the physicochemical constitution of that organ and either the quality or

the quantity of the phenomena it manifests. He was perfectly familiar with such arguments, all of which amount to no more than this, namely, that the relation between brain and mind is, at best, only a parallel relation, that is, the relation between the natural and the supernatural! So the assertions of the dualist made upon him no impression, save that they were, for the most part, untrue:—

"Thought is a form of force. We walk with the same force with which we think. Man is an organism, that changes several forms of force into thought-force. Man is a machine into which we put what we call food, and produce what we call thought. Think of that wonderful chemistry by which bread was changed into the divine tragedy of Hamlet!" (i 47)

It must not be inferred, however, that Ingersoll regarded mind and consciousness as solved problems;—that he was chargeable with the crudity usually attributed to materialistic psychology. For he was not a pure materialist. Nor was he a pure "energist": rather was he what I venture to term an agnostic monist. He said:—

"I believe there is such a thing as matter. I believe there is a something called force. The difference between force and matter I do not know. So there is a something called consciousness. Whether we call consciousness an entity or not makes no difference as to what it really is. There is something that hears, sees and feels, a something that takes cognizance of what happens in what we call the outward world. No matter whether we call this something matter or spirit, it is something that we do not know, to say the least of it, all about. We cannot understand what matter is. It defies us, and defies definitions. So, with what we call spirit, we are in utter igno-

rance of what it is. We have some little conception of what we mean by it, and of what others mean, but as to what it really is no one knows. It makes no difference whether we call ourselves Materialists or Spiritualists, we believe in all there is, no matter what you call it. If we call it all matter, then we believe that matter can think and hope and dream. If we call it all spirit, then we believe that spirit has force, that it offers a resistance; in other words, that it is, in one of its aspects, what we call matter. I cannot believe that everything can be accounted for by motion or by what we call force, because there is something that recognizes force. There is something that compares, that thinks, that remembers; there is something that suffers and enjoys; there is something that each one calls himself or herself, that is inexplicable to himself or herself, and it makes no difference whether we call this something mind or soul, effect or entity, it still eludes us, and all the words we have coined for the purpose of expressing our knowledge of this something, after all, express only our desire to know, and our efforts to ascertain." (viii 524)

Believing, then, that mind, in some unknown way, is, like physiological motion, circulation, and sensation, a function or manifestation of the organ with which it is related, could Ingersoll logically accept the popular view, that it shares at death a different fate than they? Since to reply in the negative would be entirely gratuitous, let us pass, at once, to the paramount question, Did he *deny* that it shares a different fate? And let us have the answer in the Great Agnostic's own words:—

"I have said a thousand times, and I say again, that we do not know, we cannot say, whether death is a wall or a door—the beginning, or end, of a day—the spreading of pinions to soar, or the folding forever of wings—the rise or the set of a sun, or an endless life, that brings rapture and love to every one." (vi 155)

In a letter to Mr. David S. Geer, president of

the Oakland Literary Club, Chicago, the same conviction is reiterated, and its foundation concisely stated. Mr. Geer had addressed to Dr. E. B. Foote, Sr., of New York, a birthday greeting that contained, among other things, a positive assurance of immortality :—

"117 EAST TWENTY-FIRST STREET,
"GRAMERCY PARK, April 24, '99.

"MY DEAR MR. GEER:

"What you said to Dr. Foote is beautiful and for all I *know* it may be all true. Still, I have no evidence that human beings are immortal. Neither have I any evidence that 'there is any wise and beneficent power back of all creation.' In fact, I have no evidence of creation. I believe that all matter and all force have existed from, and will exist, to eternity. There is to me no evidence of the existence of any power superior to Nature. In my opinion the supernatural does not exist. Still, we can wish in spite of, or against, evidence, and we can hope without it.

"Yours always,
"R. G. INGERSOLL."

And elsewhere :—

"* * * it is no more wonderful that we should live again than that we do live. Sometimes I have thought it not quite so wonderful for the reason that we have a start. But upon that subject I have not the slightest information. Whether man lives again or not I cannot pretend to say.

* * * * * * *

"My opinion of immortality is this :

"First.—I live, and that of itself is infinitely wonderful. Second.—There was a time when I was not, and after I was not, I was. Third.—Now that I am, I may be again; and it is no more wonderful that I may be again, if I have been, than that I am, having once been nothing." (viii 54)

"It is natural to shun death, natural to desire eternal life. With all my heart I hope for everlasting life and joy * * * ." (viii 563)

As indicated in the beginning of this chapter, it has often been asserted by his critics, that the destruction of the Bible and the Christian religion, through the universal acceptance of Ingersoll's teachings, would blot out of the human heart the hope of immortality. Passing over the fact that, as has just been shown, Ingersoll, far from denying the possibility of a future life, himself ardently hoped for it, it must be noted that the assertion in question (doubtless unwittingly, but nevertheless unavoidably) implies, that, had it not been for that book and that religion, there would now be no such hope. Ingersoll, as would be expected, clearly perceived this unfortunate corollary of his adversaries; and we accordingly find him dwelling with insistence upon the fact that the hope of immortality existed, not only thousands of years before Christ is supposed to have been born, but thousands of years before the time of Moses; that, for many thousands of years, the very cross itself has been a symbol of the life to come; that it has been found carved in stone above the graves of a people who lived and loved and hoped and dreamed beneath the same "sunny skies" long before either the Romans or the Etruscans—carved in the walls of the ruined temples of Central America—carved upon Babylonian cylinders. He further declares, with undoubted consternation to many, that, although the doctrine of a future life was taught in Egypt, India, and China thousands of years before

either Christ or Moses is supposed to have been born, and is still taught there, it is not taught in the Old Testament. He insists that, as a matter of fact, while the Old Testament tells us how man lost immortality through Jehovah's preventing Adam from eating of the tree of life, there came from the top of Sinai no hope of a hereafter; that no one in the Old Testament "stands by the dead and says, 'We shall meet again.'" And, finally, he declares that, notwithstanding the "one little passage in Job which commentators have endeavored to twist into a hope of immortality," the Old Testament does not contain, "from the first mistake in Genesis to the last curse in Malachi," a burial service, nor even a single word about another world. Indeed, he goes even further when he asserts, that, "if we take the Old Testament for authority, man is not immortal." (viii 55)

To present just here, in what might seem to be natural and logical sequence, Ingersoll's views as to whether the doctrine of immortality is taught in the New Testament, and if so, the kind of immortality there contemplated, would be premature, if not altogether irrelevant. The fact, as pointed out by him, that the hope of another life, although not recorded in the Old Testament, was held among many nations of antiquity, thousands of years before either Christ or Moses is supposed to have been born, and is now held in heathen and other non-Christian countries, is a sufficient refu-

tation of the assertion, that, since in the absence of the Bible and of Christianity there would have been, and would be, no such hope, universal unbelief in them as divine institutions, in accordance with his teachings, would destroy it. And this refutation is at the same time a demonstration,—a demonstration of the fact, that, contrary to the apparent understanding of his Christian critics, the hope of immortality is something with which neither the Bible nor Christianity necessarily has anything whatever to do. That hope is not dependent upon either. As a matter of fact, the relation is precisely the other way. Take from the New Testament and Christianity their teachings of immortality, and the Bible and Christianity would perish; but destroy every copy of the Bible, and erase from the tablet of memory the last trace of Christian thought, and the hope of immortality would still 'spring eternal in the human breast.' And what is true of the Bible and Christianity in this regard is true of every other so-called sacred book and supernatural religion.

The weakness—the falsity—of the criticisms of Ingersoll's views of immortality lies in their failure to distinguish between terms. His critics confound hope with belief, and regard belief as equivalent to realization, or as a force capable of bringing about realization. It is therefore natural that they should place the utmost importance in belief, which, by a strangely erroneous consistency, they consider to

be a mere puppet of caprice,—a result of the so-called will. They seem to think that even feigned belief is better than none; and so, ignoring the natural operations of the mind, they say to the rationalist: "The doctrines of Ingersoll may be good enough to live by, but they are poor doctrines to die by. Whatever your doubts, if you desire immortality you would better believe and be 'on the safe side.'" As though a chemist should say to a navigator who occupied an agnostic attitude toward the theories of chemistry: "If on your next voyage you wish the hydrogen and the oxygen which form the sea-water to remain united as such, not to spurn each other, and, returning to dissociate gases, allow your ship to fall to the ground, you would better believe in chemical affinity."

To such reasoning,—to the sophistical theological assertion that belief can change the fact,—the Great Agnostic, never doubting the uniformity of nature, replied:—

"If we are immortal it is a fact in nature, and we are not indebted to priests for it, nor to bibles for it, and it cannot be destroyed by unbelief." (i 523)

And again:—

"Is man immortal?

"I do not know.

"One thing I do know, and that is, that neither hope, nor fear, belief, nor denial, can change the fact. It is as it is, and it will be as it must be." (iv 64)

A question of profound interest here presents itself. As indicated in the preceding pages, it was apparent to Ingersoll, although he was far from either affirming or denying, that mind, like every other organic function, ceases at the death of the organ in which it is manifest. He was not aware that any mind had survived the death of the brain. Of one fact he was aware, however—that in the idea of immortality there is something fundamentally human—that, in every age, it had been almost universal to mankind. How did he account for this? Did he conceive it to be a gift from the supernatural? I have shown that he held it to be impossible even to think of the supernatural. Did he believe that the idea was an a priori one, as Kant believed some ideas to be? To hold that an idea is a priori is merely one way of saying that it is supernatural. Besides, Ingersoll specifically declared that all of man's ideas are a posteriori; that they were born of experience here in this world. How, then, did he account for the idea of another life?

Like all other individuals of genius, Ingersoll possessed a profound knowledge of human nature. With him, despite his stern and sometimes implacable logic, two factors entered into all mental operations,—heart and brain. He declared that whoever came to a conclusion without consulting his heart would make a mistake. And it was because he followed his own advice—it was because

"his brain took counsel of his heart"—that his conclusions were almost never wrong. He knew that those who have suffered most have thought most; that those who have lain in the lowest dungeons of despair and gloom have soared to the loftiest, sunniest, most ecstatic heights. In endeavoring, therefore, to account for that loftiest of ideas, he consulted not only reason but feeling. Finding that the brain could give no satisfactory explanation, he looked in the heart; and he found that human affection, the foundation of nearly everything else of value, is no less the foundation here. He said:—

"The idea of immortality, that like a sea has ebbed and flowed in the human heart, with its countless waves of hope and fear beating against the shores and rocks of time and fate, was not born of any book, nor of any creed, nor of any religion. It was born of human affection, and it will continue to ebb and flow beneath the mists and clouds of doubt and darkness as long as love kisses the lips of death. It is the rainbow—Hope, shining upon the tears of grief." (i 270)

Were it possible to doubt that this exquisite paragraph contains the very kernel of the Great Agnostic's convictions on the subject concerned; were it possible to doubt that it came ingenuously, spontaneously, from his heart and brain together, —not from his brain alone, as an artful attack upon theology,—our questionings would be instantly silenced by the last clause of the following passage, which was delivered many years later at the bier of a brother (as indicated in Chapter V),

and which, I may remark in passing, has been frequently misrepresented and misunderstood. I have italicized the particular clause:—

> "Life is a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights. We cry aloud, and the only answer is the echo of our wailing cry. From the voiceless lips of the unreplying dead there comes no word; *but in the night of death hope sees a star and listening love can hear the rustle of a wing.*" (xii 390)

Thus did Ingersoll find in human love, wrung by vain and impotent anguish, the secret of man's dearest wish. Thus did he, in a moment of grief, with a phrase as subtly delicate as the first tints of a summer dawn,—as gentle as hope itself,—unconsciously silence the loud pretensions of theology. As Newton, savant of the physical realm, divined in the falling apple the secret of the universe, so Ingersoll, savant of the mental realm, saw in the falling tear the radiant image of that hope of hopes. "Love," said he, taking even a deeper view, "Love is a flower that grows on the edge of the grave." Well might he have added, "and the hope of immortality is its fragrance."

But there is another side to this hope; and it was on that side that Ingersoll uttered the most Ingersollian of his anti-theological views. What is the side to which I refer?

Without entering into credal differences, it may be stated, as a general truth, that, according to the teachings of Christianity, those who believe and

practise certain things will, either at death or subsequently, be awarded everlasting joy, and that those who do not so believe and practise will, at the same time, be consigned to everlasting misery.

A logical analysis of this doctrine, especially if we accept the other alleged fundamental truths of Christianity, reveals the following absolutely unavoidable implications: (1) That an omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient being created,—called into consciousness from the unconscious elements,—billions of human beings, knowing that they were destined to everlasting misery; (2) that individuals will be held everlastingly responsible for their beliefs; (3) that finite acts will be awarded infinite punishment; (4) that the time will come when an infinitely wise, just, and merciful God will cease to be even just,—will refuse to allow his children to repent and be righteous; and (5) that human beings will be infinitely happy in heaven, knowing that those who loved them, and whom they loved, on earth are in everlasting misery.

It was against this phase of Christian immortality, and against this phase alone, that Ingersoll, with every fiber of his being, with every unit of his moral and intellectual force, waged war. This doctrine of everlasting punishment for the many and everlasting bliss for the few was the real center round which his lifelong battle raged. It made him an implacable enemy of the Christian religion. It was the one dogma that stirred the

utmost depths of his being. Its bottomless pit became a receptacle for the gall and wormwood of his indignation. But for this dogma, many hundreds of pages of Ingersoll's discussions and controversies would never have been produced; a large part of the lectures which were delivered to hundreds of thousands, and which were read by hundreds of thousands more, would never have left his lips; and Voltaire would have remained the most aggressive and formidable enemy of Christianity whom the world had ever known.

If we reflect that hatred of the idea of everlasting pain is necessarily born of human sympathy and the sense of justice, and that these exist from birth, if at all, as a part of the individual's temperament (as does poetic feeling, for example, in the temperament of the poet), we may not be surprised to learn that Ingersoll's opposition to that idea began during boyhood; but we shall be at least interested in learning under precisely what circumstances it did begin—doubly interested, I trust, because we shall, at the same time, be afforded a glimpse of the evolution of a great mind:—

"I heard hundreds of * * * evangelical sermons—heard hundreds of the most fearful and vivid descriptions of the tortures inflicted in hell, of the horrible state of the lost. I supposed that what I heard was true, and yet I did not believe it. I said: 'It is,' and then I thought: 'It cannot be.'

"These sermons made but faint impressions on my mind. I was not convinced.

* * * * * * * *

"But I heard one sermon that touched my heart, that left its mark, like a scar, on my brain.[1]

"One Sunday I went with my brother to hear a Free Will Baptist preacher. He was a large man, dressed like a farmer, but he was an orator. He could paint a picture with words.

'He took for his text the parable of 'the rich man and Lazarus.' He described Dives, the rich man—his manner of life, the excesses in which he indulged, his extravagance, his riotous nights, his purple and fine linen, his feasts, his wines, and his beautiful women.

"Then he described Lazarus, his poverty, his rags and wretchedness, his poor body eaten by disease, the crusts and crumbs he devoured, the dogs that pitied him. He pictured his lonely life, his friendless death.

"Then, changing his tone of pity to one of triumph—leaping from tears to the heights of exultation—from defeat to victory—he described the glorious company of angels, who with white and outspread wings carried the soul of the despised pauper to Paradise—to the bosom of Abraham.

"Then, changing his voice to one of scorn and loathing, he told of the rich man's death. He was in his palace, on his costly couch, the air heavy with perfume, the room filled with servants and physicians. His gold was worthless then. He could not buy another breath. He died, and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment.

"Then, assuming a dramatic attitude, putting his right hand to his ear, he whispered, 'Hark! I hear the rich man's voice. What does he say? Hark! '"Father Abraham! Father Abraham! I pray thee send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my parched tongue, for I am tormented in this flame."

"'Oh, my hearers, he has been making that request for more than eighteen hundred years. And millions of ages hence that wail will cross the gulf that lies between the saved and lost and still will be heard the cry: "Father Abraham! Father Abraham! I pray thee send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my parched tongue, for I am tormented in this flame."'

"For the first time I understood the dogma of eternal pain—appreciated 'the glad tidings of great joy.' For the first time my imagination grasped the height and depth of the Christian horror. Then I

[1] He was then about seven or eight years old.

said: 'It is a lie, and I hate your religion. If it is true, I hate your God.'[1]

"From that day I have had no fear, no doubt. For me, on that day, the flames of hell were quenched. From that day I have passionately hated every orthodox creed. That Sermon did some good." (iv 15)[2]

Fortunate hour, indeed, when infinite injustice sows the seeds from which it is to reap annihilation! Wondrous circumstance, when blind ignorance and heartlessness so touch the brain and heart of a child as to bring forth a flood of light and tears to dissipate the gloom and quench the fires of hell!

Not to the day of his death did the impression which Robert Ingersoll received on that Sunday ever leave him. Instead, it grew deeper. It was a poisoned wound which, never healing, became more and more sensitive to the environment of its possessor. As proof of this, we find, that, while in his earliest lectures he freely expressed his hatred of the dogma of everlasting punishment, it was not

[1] After reflecting upon this paragraph, we can better understand why Ingersoll, in his manhood, felt impelled to buckle on his intellectual armor in defense of the man who at the time of the sermon in question had written these words: "Any system of religion that shocks the mind of a child cannot be a true system." See *A Vindication of Thomas Paine* (v 447–524); *Thomas Paine*, a lecture (i 121–65); *Thomas Paine*, an article published in the *North American Review* for August, 1892 (xi 321–39); *Thomas Paine*, in *The Great Infidels*. (iii 384)

[2] A vivid reminder of an almost parallel circumstance in the life of Lincoln, who, on seeing, when a youth (1833), a young colored girl on the auction-block, in New Orleans, turned to his companions and said: "Boys, if I ever get a chance to hit slavery, by God, I'll hit it hard!"

until the high noon of his anti-theological career that he publicly vowed never to deliver a lecture without attacking it, and that it was not until the very ending of that career that he declared that as long as he had life, as long as he drew breath, he should hate with every drop of his blood, and would deny with all his strength, that "infinite lie." Pursuant to this determination, it is in his latest discourses that he dwells most insistently upon the dogma of eternal pain, obviously not because earlier in his career he had neglected to bestow upon it what the orthodox regarded as adequate attention, nor yet because he entertained the least fear of its gaining ground, but because it was his profound conviction, that, just as long as a thing so terrible found lodgment in a human brain, it was his duty to oppose it to the utmost extent of his power.

Those who cherish as sacred the memory of his friendship,—who have basked in the illimitable sunshine of his nature, and felt the genial warmth of his heart,—and even those who only know him through the cold medium of lead and ink, will be reluctant to believe that Robert Ingersoll was capable of hate. And, indeed, if we apply the latter word solely to the individual, we shall be obliged to yield to their reluctance. That he was capable of hating institutions and ideas, however, no one, we think, will deny; and if there was any idea that he did hate,—if, in the boundless realm of thought, there was any idea that had dropped the plummet

into the depths of his detestation,—it was the idea of everlasting punishment.

He declared it to be the one idea the infamy of which no mind could conceive, no language express. Refusing even to allow that it was an original conception of the human brain, he declared that it was born of infuriated revenge in the lowest of the animal world. It was a certificate that our remote progenitors were the vilest of beasts. Only from the leering eyes of enraged hyenas and jackals—from the glittering eyes and throbbing fangs of arboreal serpents awaiting in pendent coils their unsuspecting prey—could such a thought have sprung; and only through the slanting foreheads and the cacophonous jargon of unclean baboons could it have reached the age of man. The doctrine of everlasting punishment had blighted the flower of pity in countless hearts, and put out the light of reason in countless brains. It had mocked at hope, and, in the place of honest doubt, it had thrust upon mankind the loaded dice of predestination and free will. It had made of the grave a bottomless, shoreless sea of flame, and for cradles it had put rockers on coffins. It had shrieked in the ears of maternity: "Your child will be the fuel of eternal fire!" Over the sweet countenance of Mercy, it had spread the scowl of Typhon, and in her hand it had placed the cross-hilted sword of persecution. It had invented the *auto de fé*, the thumbscrew, and the rack. It had

built dungeons, forged chains, driven all the stakes —cut, carried, and lighted the fagots. It had robbed the peasant, robed the hypocrite, crowned and sceptered the tyrant, and stained the fair face of Europe with ashes, blood, and tears. It had driven Justice from her throne of "eternal calm," and put behind the universe an infinite fiend.

The doctrine that an omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient being called into consciousness from the unconscious elements billions of human beings, knowing that they were destined to everlasting misery, was to Ingersoll the infamy of infamies, the one "unpardonable sin" against mankind. To the assertion that God has the right to damn us, because he made us, Ingersoll replied: "That is just the reason that he has not a right to damn us." (i 508) Above, below, nor beyond this reply, reason and justice cannot go. It would not do to say that God made man "a free moral agent,"—gave him a "free will." An *all*-knowing God gave man a free will, *not* knowing how he would use it!

That phase of the doctrine which asserts that individuals will be held responsible for their beliefs—that one will be everlastingly punished for failing to believe a thing to be true, when his reason, having heard the testimony both for and against, tells him it is false, and that another will be rewarded with everlasting bliss for believing the same thing to be true, when his reason, having

likewise heard the testimony both for and against, tells him it *is true*—received, as we should expect, the full measure of Ingersoll's denunciation :—

"This frightful declaration, 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned,' has filled the world with agony and crime." (i 479)

That he regarded it as scarcely more pernicious than absurd and unpsychological, however, is evident from the following :—

"The truth is, that no one can justly be held responsible for his thoughts. The brain thinks without asking our consent. We believe, or we disbelieve, without an effort of the will. Belief is a result. It is the effect of evidence upon the mind. The scales turn in spite of him who watches. There is no opportunity of being honest or dishonest in the formation of an opinion. The conclusion is entirely independent of desire. We must believe, or we must doubt, in spite of what we wish." (vi 147)

Still more objectionable was that feature of the "plan of salvation" which arbitrarily attaches infinite consequences to finite acts. Of course, no thinker of Ingersoll's subtlety and profundity could fail to recognize, that, in the ethical realm, as in the physical, all acts are related, if only remotely and vaguely. Nevertheless, the idea that any act of this brief life—this glint and shadow on the dial of eternity—could merit everlasting misery was to him "a proposition so monstrous" that he was "astonished that it ever found lodgment in the brain of man."

Equally "monstrous" was that feature of the

"plan" which implies that the fate of the soul is everlastingly fixed at death. If, during this life, there is more rejoicing in heaven over one soul that repents, than over ninety and nine not gone astray, why, reasoned Ingersoll, should the chance of repentance be denied in the next? Why should infinite goodness there stand between the repentant soul and righteousness? How could infinite mercy have an end? Why should the love that counts every falling sparrow and numbers every hair turn to hate on the verge of the grave? Why should the smile of infinite beneficence wrinkle to a frown on the somber face of Death?—

"Strange! that a world cursed by God, filled with temptations and thick with fiends, should be the only place where hope exists, the only place where man can repent, the only place where reform is possible! Strange! that heaven, filled with angels and presided over by God, is the only place where reformation is utterly impossible! Yet these are the teachings of all the believers in the eternity of punishment." (iii 318)

And again:—

"All I insist is, if there is another life, the basest soul that finds its way to that dark or radiant shore will have the everlasting chance of doing right. Nothing but the most cruel ignorance, the most heartless superstition, the most ignorant theology, ever imagined that the few days of human life spent here, surrounded by mists and clouds of darkness, blown over life's sea by storms and tempests of passion, fixed for all eternity the condition of the human race. If this doctrine be true, this life is but a net, in which Jehovah catches souls for hell." (vi 100)

And even ignoring all of the points which we have

shown to have met with the Great Agnostic's opposition, there is one which would alone have made him an aggressive opponent of the Christian plan of salvation. It is the one which implies that human beings,—beings of perfect goodness,—will be perfectly happy in heaven, knowing that those who loved them, and whom they loved, on earth are in everlasting misery. For if, to him, there was anything intrinsic,—anything that should endure and bind after all else had evanesced,—it was the golden chord of human affection. "Heaven," he said, "is where those are we love, and those who love us. And I wish to go to no world unless I can be accompanied by those who love me here." (i 510) He declared, that, although, according to one of the alleged fundamental truths of Christianity, eternal happiness was rendered possible by infinite love, there would, under the Christian doctrine of immortality, be no love in heaven. For, did not that doctrine compel the father to say: "I can be happy with my daughter in hell"? Did it not compel the son to say: "I can be happy in heaven when my mother,—the woman who would have died for me,—is in everlasting pain"? Did it not compel the believing mother to say: "I can be supremely happy knowing that my generous and brave but unbelieving boy is in hell"? To those who would evade this extremity by assuming that the elect would be oblivious of the fate of the lost, he replied: "Another

life is nought, unless we know and love again the ones who love us here." (xii 400)

Thus did the Great Agnostic again take counsel of his heart. As he had already found in human affection the secret, the origin, of the hope of hopes, so now did he find the magic essence that keeps it bright and pure. Thus did he find that the fairest flower is soil and light and dew unto itself, and that by its own fragrance it stifles the very thorns that threaten its existence,—the vines that venomous clamber to destroy.—

"And suppose after all that death does end all. Next to eternal joy, next to being forever with those we love and those who have loved us, next to that, is to be wrapped in the dreamless drapery of eternal peace. Next to eternal life is eternal sleep. Upon the shadowy shore of death the sea of trouble casts no wave. Eyes that have been curtained by the everlasting dark, will never know again the burning touch of tears. Lips touched by eternal silence will never speak again the broken words of grief. Hearts of dust do not break. The dead do not weep. Within the tomb no veiled and weeping sorrow sits, and in the rayless gloom is crouched no shuddering fear.

"I had rather think of those I have loved, and lost, as having returned to earth, as having become a part of the elemental wealth of the world—I would rather think of them as unconscious dust, I would rather dream of them as gurgling in the streams, floating in the clouds, bursting in the foam of light upon the shores of worlds, I would rather think of them as the lost visions of a forgotten night, than to have even the faintest fear that their naked souls have been clutched by an orthodox god. I will leave my dead where nature leaves them. Whatever flower of hope springs up in my heart I will cherish, I will give it breath of sighs and rain of tears. But I can not believe that there is any being in this universe who has created a human soul for eternal pain. I would rather that every god would destroy himself; I would rather that we all should go to eternal chaos, to black and starless night, than that just one soul should suffer eternal agony.

"I have made up my mind that if there is a god, he will be merciful to the merciful.

"Upon that rock I stand.—

"That he will not torture the forgiving.—

"Upon that rock I stand.—

"That every man should be true to himself, and that there is no world, no star, in which honesty is a crime.

"Upon that rock I stand.

"The honest man, the good woman, the happy child, have nothing to fear, either in this world or in the world to come.

"Upon that rock I stand." (i 523)

That this was, indeed, the "rock" upon which he stood, and that it and such other of his conclusions as have been presented in this chapter were founded in the depths of moral and intellectual conviction, are made doubly evident by the private letter which I introduce with the following explanation.

In the summer of 1885, a lady of San Francisco lost, by sudden and unexpected death, her only child, a son. Her grief, in itself overwhelming, was greatly intensified by the terrors of the Calvinistic creed in which she had been reared, and according to which she well knew that there was, for her unconverted son, no hope. Such was her anguish that her reason, if not her life, was almost despaired of. Among those who vainly tried to console her was Mrs. Sarah B. Cooper, a lady very prominent in Bible-class and other church work. One would naturally suppose that Mrs. Cooper, under the circumstances, would have appealed to some member of the clergy; but instead, she turned

straightway to Ingersoll, begging that he endeavor, by written word, to relieve the bereaved mother of her terrible apprehension. His letter was given to a reporter for publication, on condition that the name of the recipient be withheld:—

"My Dear Madam:

"Mrs. Cooper has told me the sad story of your almost infinite sorrow. I am not foolish enough to suppose that I can say or do anything to lessen your great grief, your anguish for his loss; but may be I can say something to drive from your poor heart the fiend of fear—fear for him.

"If there is a God, let us believe that he is good; and if he is good, the good have nothing to fear. I have been told that your son was kind and generous; that he was filled with charity and sympathy. Now, we know that in this world like begets like, kindness produces kindness, and all good bears the fruit of joy. Belief is nothing—deeds are everything; and if your son was kind he will naturally find kindness wherever he may be. You would not inflict endless pain upon your worst enemy. Is God worse than you? You could not bear to see a viper suffer forever. Is it possible that God will doom a kind and generous boy to everlasting pain? Nothing can be more monstrously absurd and cruel.

"The truth is, that no human being knows anything of what is beyond the grave. If nothing is known, then it is not honest for anyone to pretend that he does know. If nothing is known, then we can hope only for the good. If there be a God your boy is no more in his power now than he was before his death—no more than you are at the present moment. Why should we fear God more after death than before? Does the feeling of God toward his children change the moment they die? While we are alive they say God loves us; when will he cease to love us? True love never changes. I beg of you to throw away all fear. Take counsel of your own heart. If God exists, your heart is the best revelation of him, and your heart could never send your boy to endless pain. After all, no one knows. The ministers know nothing. And all the churches in the world know no more on this subject than the ants on the ant-hills. Creeds are good for nothing except to break the hearts of the loving.

"Let us have courage. Under the seven-hued arch of hope let the dead sleep. I do not pretend to know, but I do know that others do not know. Listen to your heart, believe what it says, and wait with patience and without fear for what the future has for all. If we can get no comfort from what people know, let us avoid being driven to despair by what they do not know.

"I wish I could say something that would put a star in your night of grief—a little flower in your lonely path—and if an unbeliever has such a wish, surely an infinitely good being never made a soul to be the food of pain through countless years.

"Sincerely yours,

"R. G. INGERSOLL."

The reply :—

"DEAR COLONEL INGERSOLL:

"I found your letter inclosed with one from ——— [Mrs. Cooper] at my door on the way to this hotel to see a friend. I broke the seal here, and through blinding tears—letting it fall from my hands between each sentence to sob my heart out—read it. The first peace I have known, real peace, since the terrible blow, has come to me now. While I will not doubt the existence of a God, I feel that I can rest my grief-stricken heart on his goodness and mercy; and you have helped me to do this. Why, you have helped me to believe in an all-merciful and loving Creator, who has gathered (I will try to believe) my poor little boy—my kind, large-hearted child—into his tender and sheltering arms. There is a genuine ring in your words that lifts me up.

"Your belief, so clear and logical, so filled with common-sense, corresponds, so far back as I can remember, with my own matter-of-fact ideas; and I was the child of good and praying parents; and my great wondering eyes, questioning silently when they talked to me,—my strange ways, while I tried to be good,—caused them often great anxiety and many a pang—God forgive me!

"I am writing, while people are talking about me, just a line to thank you from the bottom of my heart for the comfort you have given me to-day. You great, good man; I see the traces of your tears all over your letter, and I could clasp your hand and bless you for this comfort you have given my poor heart."

And so, at last, we find that Ingersoll did not seek to destroy the hope of another life, but that he merely sought "to prevent theologians from destroying this"; that he did not seek to disparage the idea of a heaven in which rewards should be based upon the principles of eternal justice, but that he did seek "to put out the ignorant and revengeful fires of hell." We find that he did not affirm, that he did not deny, but that, because he lived, the great bow of hope, springing from the depths of human affection, arches with brighter radiance the darkness of honest doubt.[1]

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[1] The two preceding letters, and, in part, the substance of the narrative introducing them, are from *Col. Robert G. Ingersoll As He Is*, by E. M. Macdonald.

The Mrs. Cooper mentioned in the text and letters was president of the Golden Gate Kindergarten Association and Free Normal Training School. She was a second or a third cousin of Ingersoll. Eleven years after the occurrence of the incident above related,—that is, after eleven more years of experience in the church,—she wrote to Ingersoll, in part, as follows: "Were I to pass away before you, dear Cousin Robert, I would rather have *you* say a few words over my sleeping dust than any one in the world. I *believe in you.* I believe less and less in theologians. *Experience* has forced this upon me. There are *some* true, good men in the ministry. There are many false-hearted men, who do not deserve to be respected. Of this I am sure."

CHAPTER XV.

HIS DOMESTIC TEACHINGS

Woman, Love, Marriage, Home.

IT HAS been written, that upon the urn inclosing the ashes of our reformer should be the words, "Liberator of Men." Without attributing to the author of the latter any lack of comprehension, I would substitute, "Liberator of Man, Woman, and Child." And even this, as far as woman is concerned, is hardly adequate. Ingersoll was more than the liberator of woman: he was a worshiper, an adorer, of woman; and he stood as her uncompromising champion,—her invincible defender from every form and manifestation of barbaric cruelty and theological bigotry, whether it first appeared during the earliest historic times, or during the days preceding his death. No one who is not both profoundly and widely familiar with his thought and work can possibly realize the full truth and justness of this statement. For a comprehensive view of Ingersoll on a given point is not to be obtained at random, or at a passing glance. Nor is such a view to be had

through a mental microscope: the field to be surveyed is too large—he is too big a man.

Thus we find that one of his strongest objections to the Jewish and Christian cosmogony and theology, from creation to the ascension of Christ, is the position of inferiority and degradation to which woman is therein assigned. Jehovah's attempt to induce Adam to select "an helpmeet for him" from among the "cattle," "the fowl of the air," and the "beasts of the field"; the failure of Adam so to select a companion, and the consequent creation of woman from one of his ribs, thus placing her on a plane somewhat higher than that of the beast, but lower than that of man; the attributing of all the sins of the world to the first woman, through her tempting of Adam to fall; the curse which Jehovah placed upon maternity; her degradation by sanctioning polygamy, concubinage, and slavery; the failure of Christ to recognize her equality with man; her calumniation and stigmatization by the early Christian "fathers"—all this (and much more) gave bitter and unpardonable offense to Ingersoll's sense of justice and of the sacredness of womanhood. Indeed, it would have required only the teachings of the Bible, and the attitude of the church, in reference to woman, to make Ingersoll an implacable enemy of the Christian religion.

And, putting entirely aside, for the present, his purely anti-theological propaganda, what a knight-

like gallant he was! How he did shiver with his intellectual lance the battle-axes and bludgeons which the savagery, selfishness, and cant of "the stronger sex" had raised above the head of woman! We should search in vain this wondrously flexible language of ours for a word of love, adoration, liberation, vindication, or defense that he did not use in her behalf. He was her champion from the first. While the wise judges of the law were denying Susan B. Anthony the right of trial by jury for the crime of having voted, Ingersoll was declaring: "Woman has all the rights I have, and one more, and that is the right to be protected, because she is the weaker." He insisted, that woman is better than man, that she has greater burdens and responsibilities, and that it is for that reason that her faults are considered greater. He contended, that woman is not the intellectual inferior, but, potentially at least, the intellectual equal, of man, and, moreover, that the men who assert the contrary "cannot, by offering themselves in evidence, substantiate their declaration." He believed that she would become man's successful rival in every department of artistic and intellectual endeavor. She had already achieved many triumphs in law, medicine, art, sculpture, and literature, and of the latter had raised the moral standard. He would give to her, as to man, all the education that she is capable of receiving. In other words, he would open wide to her the only gateway that leads to absolute

moral and intellectual freedom. "The parasite of woman is the priest," he said; therefore, he would educate her out of the orthodox church. "There will never be a generation of great men," he declared, "until there has been a generation of free women—of free mothers." (iv 142) He failed to discern either justice or reason in giving to the brutal and ignorant negro (or to the brutal and ignorant white man) the right to vote, while denying it to the refined, educated, and intellectual mother; and so he would extend to woman, not the "privilege" of, but her inalienable moral and political right to, a voice in the affairs of town and city, state and nation. In short, to woman, as to man, he would apply the Ingersollian Golden Rule:—

"Give to every other human being every right that you claim for yourself."

But while this breif résumé will serve to indicate, with some degree of adequacy, Ingersoll's regard for, and loyalty to woman, it is to such passages as the following, that we must turn for the underlying secret of that regard and loyalty. It is through the crystalline clearness of such passages, that we perceive, in woman, the Ingersollian ideal of *humanity* and *beauty*:—

"I not only admire woman as the most beautiful object ever created, but I reverence her as the redeeming glory of humanity, the sanctuary of all the virtues, the pledge of all perfect qualities of heart and head." (viii 531)

And again, to the same effect :—

"The man who has really won the love of one good woman in this world, I do not care if he dies in the ditch a beggar, his life has been a success." (i 358)

This elevation of woman to the very summit of humanity will enable us to understand, not only with the head, but with the heart, Ingersoll's exaltation of love in the following prose-poem, which, for appositeness and delicacy of imagery, poetic truth, insouciance, and verbal melody (be it said in passing), has been equaled by none but the master lyricists of our tongue :—

"Love is the only bow on life's dark cloud. It is the morning and the evening star. It shines upon the babe, and sheds its radiance on the quiet tomb. It is the mother of art, inspirer of poet, patriot and philosopher. It is the air and light of every heart—builder of every home, kindler of every fire on every hearth. It was the first to dream of immortality. It fills the world with melody—for music is the voice of love. Love is the magician, the enchanter, that changes worthless things to joy, and makes right royal kings and queens of common clay. It is the perfume of that wondrous flower, the heart, and without that sacred passion, that divine swoon, we are less than beasts ; but with it, earth is heaven, and we are gods." (ii 420)

After the preceding, we shall not wonder that Ingersoll was an uncompromising champion of monogamic marriage,—certainly not if we recall his fundamental maxim : "The only way to be happy yourself is to make somebody else so." But if he was an uncompromising champion of monogamy, he was an implacable enemy of all ideas and practices tending to discredit it. Indeed,

if than to defend marriage there was anything which he did out of deeper conviction, with greater earnestness, it was to attack celibacy; and if than to attack celibacy there was anything which he did out of deeper conviction, with greater earnestness, it was to attack polygamy. To him, celibacy was "the essence of vulgarity"—"the most obscene word in our language," while polygamy was "the infamy of infamies"—a thing the "filth" of which "all the languages of the world are insufficient to express."

With such hatred of polygamy, is it any surprise, by the way, that he regarded the following, from Shakespeare (*Sonnet* CXVI), as "the greatest line in the poetry of the world"—"the sublimest declaration in the literature of the world"?—

> "Love is not love
> Which alters when it alteration finds."

And after his characterization of celibacy, as above, can we wonder that the advocates of that doctrine fare at his hands no better than this?—

> "I believe in marriage, and I hold in utter contempt the opinions of those long-haired men and short-haired women who denounce the institution of marriage." (i 357)

Or this?—

> "Back of all churches is human affection. Back of all theologies is the love of the human heart. Back of all your priests and creeds is

the adoration of the one woman by the one man, and of the one man by the one woman. Back of your faith is the fireside; back of your folly is the family; and back of all your holy mistakes and your sacred absurdities is the love of husband and wife, of parent and child." (vi 382)

Continuing in natural sequence, we find that Ingersoll's ideal of the institution which he so steadfastly championed was quite removed from that of the great majority of individuals, theological or lay. To him, the "citadel and fortress of civilization," "the holiest institution among men," was something more than a "solemnized" or "legalized" ceremonial contract. While ecclesiastical, social, and civil institutions, laws, and customs might prescribe the ceremony, and furnish the witnesses, no one but the two parties to the contract—not even God himself, if he exist—could effect the real marriage. All others, whether in heaven or on earth, were simply either curious onlookers or impudent intruders. It was therefore the knot intrinsic of human love, and that alone, which constituted true marriage. He says, the italics being mine:—

"Love is a transfiguration. It ennobles, purifies and glorifies. *In true marriage two hearts burst into flower. Two lives unite. They melt in music. Every moment is a melody.* Love is a revelation, a creation. From love the world borrows its beauty and the heavens their glory. Justice, self-denial, charity and pity are the children of love. * * * Without love all glory fades, the noble falls from life, art dies, music loses meaning and becomes mere motions of the air, and virtue ceases to exist." (vi 384)

After this presentation of the Ingersollian view

of love and marriage, we naturally proceed to a consideration of the importance, or rather, the absolute essentiality and sacredness, which, in his philosophy, the great humanitarian assigned to the family and the home. In his innumerable utterances concerning them, as in nearly all his utterances on other themes, he has not merely expressed the profoundest soul-born reasons and convictions: he has clothed the latter in ideal beauty. Thus, in the following, the family is glorified as the very foundation of all present worth, not only, but as the hope and salvation of the future:—

"Civilization rests upon the family. The good family is the unit of good government. The virtues grow about the holy hearth of home—they cluster, bloom, and shed their perfume round the fireside where the one man loves the one woman. Lover—husband—wife—mother—father—child—home!—without these sacred words, the world is but a lair, and men and women merely beasts." (ii 251)

And again:—

"I believe in the religion of the family. I believe that the roof-tree is sacred, from the smallest fiber that feels the soft cool clasp of earth, to the topmost flower that spreads its bosom to the sun, and like a spendthrift gives its perfume to the air. The home where virtue dwells with love is like a lily with a heart of fire—the fairest flower in all the world." (ii 423)

He would convert mankind to this "religion of the family,"—this blessed "gospel of the fireside":—

"Let me tell you * * * it is far more important to build a home than to erect a church. The holiest temple beneath the stars is a

home that love has built. And the holiest altar in all the wide world is the fireside around which gather father and mother and the sweet babes." (i 468)

With the world domestically evangelized, or Ingersollized, rather, we should have, not occasional, but innumerable pictures like this :—

"If upon this earth we ever have a glimpse of heaven, it is when we pass a home in winter, at night, and through the windows, the curtains drawn aside, we see the family about the pleasant hearth; the old lady knitting; the cat playing with the yarn; the children wishing they had as many dolls or dollars or knives or somethings, as there are sparks going out to join the roaring blast; the father reading and smoking, and the clouds rising like incense from the altar of domestic joy. I never passed such a house without feeling that I had received a benediction." (i 390)

And no one with heart and brain ever read such a passage without feeling the same way.

But, as we should naturally suppose, Ingersoll's philosophy offered something more than even the preceding incomparably beautiful and inspiring ideals of love and marriage, of family and home. His "religion of the family," his "gospel of the fireside," did not end with a glimpse of the loved and loving father, mother, and babes "about the pleasant hearth"—did not conclude with the "benediction" which we have just received. The philosophy that placed all human life on the firm basis of happiness as "the only good" did not content itself with pictures, which, even though momentarily real, might be, after all, as purely temporal, as transient, as they were beautiful. Far from it,

that philosophy would make those pictures the idealistic reflections of enduring realities. Indeed, it was with the "benediction," that Ingersoll's domestic evangelization really commenced.

I have stated that Ingersoll was not only the "Liberator of Man," but the "Liberator of Man, Woman, and Child." Having accordingly shown, as fully as is here practicable, that he was woman's liberator outside the family circle, it is my next pleasure to show that he was her liberator within that circle,—the liberator of the wife and mother.

"But from what," will perhaps be asked, "did he liberate her?" He liberated her from the idea that there must be a "head of the family"—a "boss." He liberated her from the heartless time-sanctified doctrine of the divine rights of domestic kings—from the tyrant of the fireside—the Jehovah of the hearth. He demolished the latter's petty throne, and on its ruins made "a happy fireside clime to weans and wife." He commanded the husband to be a gentleman; bade the wife arise, Minerva-like, from her swollen knees; and he wrote, in glowing gold, on the somber walls of millions of orthodox homes: "Liberty, Equality, and Love." If this alone had been his earthly task, pæans of praise should rise to his memory from every hearth in Christendom.

Any idea that savored of tyranny filled his liberty-loving, justice-loving soul with indignation and repugnance. To him, tyranny in one place

was the same as tyranny in another. In this, he was absolutely and fundamentally consistent. "The Universe," he declared, "ought to be a pure democracy—an infinite republic without a tyrant and without a chain." (xii 21) Because he believed in liberty and justice, he rejected the tyrant of heaven; and because he rejected the latter, he rejected the tyrants of earth, including the tyrant in the home. Completely and perfectly civilized, he was as consistent in rejecting tyranny in all three places as the savage is in accepting it in all three. The average civilized man—the average American, say—is inconsistent here: he differs from Ingersoll about as much as he differs from the savage. He believes in tyranny in heaven, democracy in The White House, and tyranny in the home. Ingersoll believed in democracy everywhere.

And in his domestic philosophy, "democracy" has much more than its usual significance. For the Ingersollian ideal of home excludes not only the time-honored notion of the domestic tyrant,—"the head of the family," the "boss,"—but all idea of duty and obligation as well. While the ideal democracy exists by virtue of a government which derives its powers from the consent of the governed, and which, therefore, it is the common obligation and duty of those concerned to support and obey, the Ingersollian home exists solely in the mutual adoration of husband and wife,—the common affection of parents and child:—

"In Love's fair realm husband and wife are king and queen, sceptred and crowned alike and seated on the self-same throne." (*Prose-Poems and Selections*, p. 273)

And again:—

"The highest ideal of a family is where all are equal—where love has superseded authority—where each seeks the good of all, and where none obey * * * ." (vi 381)

The ideal democracy is government by consent: the Ingersollian home is the anarchy of love. In the latter, the husband loves the wife, "not only for his own sake, but for her sake. He longs to make her happy—to fill her life with joy." (xii 293) And it is upon this basis that the great liberator proffers the following advice:—

"Whoever marries simply for himself will make a mistake; but whoever loves a woman so well that he says, 'I will make her happy,' makes no mistake. And so with the woman who says, 'I will make him happy.' There is only one way to be happy, and that is to make somebody else so, and,"—

he adds, in that familiar straight-out Ingersollian style, which unmistakably means that there is a man behind it all—

"you cannot be happy by going 'cross lots; you have got to go the regular turnpike road." (i 364)

As would naturally be supposed, in championing the ideal home as the *sine qua non* of happiness, "the only good," there are, besides the "boss,"—"the head of the family,"—two classes of husbands

whom the great liberator of woman does not overlook—to whom, indeed, he does not hesitate to impart some seemingly wholesome advice—"cross" husbands and "stingy" husbands.

Of the former, he inquires, in a tone which itself elicits a melancholy negation :—

"What right has he to murder the sunshine of a day? What right has he to assassinate the joy of life?"

And he adds, for the benefit of this cross husband :—

"When you go home you ought to go like a ray of light—so that it will, even in the night, burst out of the doors and windows and illuminate the darkness." (i 365)

As to the stingy husband, it is inconceivable, despite the strength of religious prejudice, that even the most orthodox of wives and mothers could fail to appreciate the following :—

"Do you know that I have known men who would trust their wives with their hearts and their honor but not with their pocketbooks; not with a dollar. When I see a man of that kind, I always think he knows which of these articles is the most valuable. Think of making your wife a beggar! Think of her having to ask you every day for a dollar, or for two dollars or fifty cents! 'What did you do with that dollar I gave you last week?' Think of having a wife that is afraid of you! What kind of children do you expect to have with a beggar and a coward for their mother? Oh, I tell you if you have but a dollar in the world, and you have got to spend it, spend it like a king; spend it as though it were a dry leaf and you the owner of unbounded forests! That's the way to spend it! I had rather be a beggar and spend my last dollar like a king, than be a king and spend my money like a beggar! If it has got to go, let it go!" (i 367)

And when some well-meaning heretic to the Ingersollian domestic gospel,—some thrifty gentleman who has never known the ecstasies of love,—objects that "Your doctrine about loving and wives and all that is splendid for the rich, but it won't do for the poor," the great apostle of love replies:—

"I tell you * * * there is more love in the homes of the poor than in the palaces of the rich. The meanest hut with love in it is a palace fit for the gods, and a palace without love is a den only fit for wild beasts. That is my doctrine! You cannot be so poor that you cannot help somebody. Good nature is the cheapest commodity in the world; and love is the only thing that will pay ten per cent. to borrower and lender both. Do not tell me that you have got to be rich!" (i 368) "No matter whether you are rich or poor, treat your wife as though she were a splendid flower, and she will fill your life with perfume and with joy." (i 371)

Under the latter conditions, even the poorest of men would be a Crœsus; for "Joy is wealth," and "Happiness is the legal tender of the soul."

Nor does the preceding, amply as it would seem to establish Ingersoll's preëminence as champion of the fireside, afford the most significant evidence of the superlative importance which, in his philosophy, he assigns to family and home. Many passages uttered or written in connection with subjects widely divergent from the latter, and from one another, afford even more significant evidence. They are found, here and there, throughout all his productions. Indeed, the more comprehensively and critically we examine his work, and

the longer we contemplate his life, the more certain does it become that the hearth-fire is the sun around which all the planets of his system revolve. Whether we read his lay utterances, his legal and political addresses, his anti-theological lectures and discussions, his tributes to departed worth, his poetry—whatever of his we read—we find the same precious element: the hearth-fire lights the page! In economics, in politics, in religion, the roof-tree is the standard by which all else is measured—the criterion for acceptance or rejection.

Thus he objects alike to socialism, slavery, polygamy, and "free love" because they divide the family or destroy the home. Similarly, he objects to the Christian doctrine of immortality because it offers, ostensibly through the lips of Christ, "everlasting life" to "everyone that hath forsaken * * * father, or mother, or wife, or children * * *" (i 467), in this life, and because it divides the family in the life which it promises. "I will never desert the one I love for the promise of any god," he declares. He opposes Sabbatarianism because the "poor mechanic, working all the week, * * * needs a day * * * to live with wife and child * * * . And his weary wife needs a breath of sunny air, away from street and wall, amid the hills, or by the margin of the sea, where she can sit and prattle with her babe and fill with happy dreams the long, glad day." (*Prose-Poems and Selections*, p. 278) "Maternity," he says, "is

the most pathetic fact in the universe" (viii 428) —mother and wife the holiest words in every tongue. "It is far more important to love your wife than to love God" (i 467), he insists; and he makes of the ideal husband a worshiper in the noblest sense: "To build a home, to keep a fire on the sacred hearth, to fill with joy the heart of her who rocks the cradle of your child. This is worship." After saying, in his tribute to Mills, that "wife and children pressed their kisses on his lips," he adds: "This is enough. The longest life contains no more. This fills the vase of joy." (xii 403)

Of such expressions, there is in *Ingersoll* no end; but it is perhaps in that greatest of war-paintings, *A Vision of War*, that his domestic love and sympathy rise to the loftiest heights, or rather, sink to the most touching depths: for it is pathos which is there achieved. It is there, at the sound "of heroic bugles," that "some are parting with mothers who hold them and press them to their hearts again and again, and say nothing." It is there that departing patriots "are bending over cradles, kissing babes that are asleep." It is there that others "are talking with wives, and endeavoring with brave words, spoken in the old tones, to drive from their hearts the awful fear." It is there that the wife is "standing in the door with the babe in her arms—standing in the sunlight sobbing. At the turn of the road a hand waves—she

answers by holding high in her loving arms the child. He is gone, and forever." (ix 167) This is dramatic, tragic—the perfection of pathos! And it was, I repeat, Ingersoll's profound domestic love and sympathy, blending with the graceful flame of his genius, that created it—one of the greatest qualities of the greatest poetry.

But of all the precious words that he wrought from feelings of ruby and thoughts of gold, those most clearly disclosing his sense of the utter vanity and insignificance of all else in comparison with the home are yet to follow. It will be recalled by the reader of Chapter IV, that, while Ingersoll was unable (when in Paris in 1875) to locate, through the superintendent of Père Lachaise, the final resting-place of Auguste Comte, he did locate "the grave of the old Napoleon." It was during his contemplation by that "magnificent tomb of gilt and gold"; it was while he "gazed upon the sarcophagus of rare and nameless marble"—while he "leaned over the balustrade and thought about the career of the greatest soldier of the modern world," from "the banks of the Seine" to Saint Helena, that he was moved to utter, in the now world-famous "Soliloquy," words which disclosed in their author as great a genius for domestic love and human sympathy as Napoleon had possessed for murder:—

"I thought of the orphans and widows he had made—of the tears that had been shed for his glory, and of the only woman who ever

loved him, pushed from his heart by the cold hand of ambition. And I said, I would rather have been a French peasant and worn wooden shoes. I would rather have lived in a hut with a vine growing over the door, and the grapes growing purple in the amorous kisses of the autumn sun. I would rather have been that poor peasant, with my loving wife by my side, knitting as the day died out of the sky—with my children upon my knees and their arms about me—I would rather have been that man, and gone down to the tongueless silence of the dreamless dust, than to have been that imperial impersonation of force and murder, known as Napoleon the Great." (i 370)

Ah, that "hut with a vine growing over the door"! It takes a great man to prefer that hut to an empire and "a magnificent tomb of gilt and gold, fit almost for a deity dead"—a great man.

And not only did Ingersoll place domestic love above all else; not only would he evangelize the world with his "gospel of the fireside"; he would soothe mankind with the beautiful thought that love is eternal. Those who recall that the Great Agnostic traced the hope of a future life to human love in the present,—to "a flower that grows on the edge of the grave,"—will not wonder at this—at the following wishful vision of immortal love on earth:—

"And do you know, it is a splendid thing to think that the woman you really love will never grow old to you. Through the wrinkles of time, through the mask of years, if you really love her, you will always see the face you loved and won. And a woman who really loves a man does not see that he grows old; he is not decrepit to her; he does not tremble; he is not old; she always sees the same gallant gentleman who won her hand and heart. I like to think of it in that way; I like to think that love is eternal. And to love in that way and then go down the hill of life together, and as you go down, hear,

perhaps, the laughter of grandchildren, while the birds of joy and love sing once more in the leafless branches of the tree of age." (i 371)

There is another picture, the only one, perhaps, in the gallery of English letters, which would make for this a perfect companion-piece. The two ought not to be longer apart:—

"John Anderson, my jo, John
When we were first acquent,
Your locks were like the raven,
Your bonnie brow was brent;
But now your brow is beld, John,
Your locks are like the snaw;
But blessings on your frosty pow,
John Anderson, my jo.

"John Anderson, my jo, John,
We clamb the hill thegither;
And monie a canty day, John,
We've had wi' ane anither:
Now we maun totter down, John,
But hand in hand we'll go,
And sleep thegither at the foot,
John Anderson, my jo."

And just as these two utterances are inseparably united in our hearts and memories, not because of any resemblance in literary form, but because of the affection and fidelity which permeate both, —which are the origin of both,—so with many other utterances of the same authors. And so with the authors themselves. Indeed, to the worshiper at the shrine of humanitarian genius, not only the qualities mentioned, but the tenderness and the ardent love of liberty and justice which

they alike manifested, have long since transformed the names of Robert Burns and Robert Ingersoll into perfect synonyms for each other.

It was said by Ingersoll, that "men are oaks, women are vines, children are flowers." We have admiringly beheld the "oaks" and the "vines," more especially the latter, and have heard his teachings concerning their proper climate and environment. Let us enjoy with him, in our next chapter, the perfume of the "flowers."

CHAPTER XVI.

HIS DOMESTIC TEACHINGS

(*concluded*)

Children—Their Rearing and Education.

SINCE the preceding presentation of Ingersoll as the liberator and champion of the wife and mother necessarily involves the logical correlative that he was also the liberator and champion of children, the latter fact requires no specific insistence here; and we may therefore pass, without undue delay, to the presentation of his views on the subject concerned. But we shall be able to appreciate more fully, more clearly, more justly, the extent to which he was the liberator and champion of children, if we recall, in so passing, the principal counter ideas of the subject which were prevalent when he began his anti-theological humanitarian crusade.

I refer to the ideas of childhood which were prevalent when he began his crusade, and I term that crusade *anti-theological humanitarian*, for the simple and obvious reason that the ideas of childhood to which he objected were indissolubly associated

with orthodox Christianity. Beneath them, like mire beneath a bed of noxious weeds, was the dogma of total depravity, while above and around them were the ominous and threatening clouds of foreordination, predestination, and everlasting punishment. In the midst of this horrid nightmare, this mental miasma, this moral morass, the lot of childhood was pitiable in the extreme. The sweetest child,—the fairest human flower that blossomed into smiles in the sunshine of a mother's eyes,—was scarcely more fortunate than a domestic animal. Indeed, it was, in one respect, less fortunate; for the animal had no soul to be depraved in the first place, nor to be damned in the second. Surely this meant, to the proverbial dog, something more than the crumbs that fell from his master's table!

In those gloomy orthodox days, instead of being welcomed as blossoms are welcomed in the sunshine and fragrance of the garden, children were regarded as divine charges—incarnations of awful responsibilities from on high. Parents believed in a tyrant in heaven. They knew precisely what he exacted from them, and they were intelligent enough, and only enough, to recognize a perfect analogy between their relations to that tyrant and their children's relations to them. They realized that they themselves could not be orthodox and happy at the same time; and so the melodious laughter, the irrepressibly joyous prattle, of child-

hood became, in their ears, a hideous din of irreverence. Feeling the grave responsibility that rested upon them, they sought to secure for their children supernal bliss hereafter, in exchange for orthodox misery now. They transformed the home into a penitentiary, the nursery into a sepulcher, the cradle into a coffin. Every day then was what the really orthodox would like to have Sunday now, and every Sunday then was what our most exemplary penitentiary would be if it were located in the center of our largest cemetery. Certain as these parents were of all things theological, there were at least three things of which they were doubly certain, despite the mutual contradiction between the last two: That "hell is paved with infants' skulls," that all children are totally depraved, and that 'to spare the rod is to spoil the child.'[1] They knew that countless children had been damned, that countless others would be, that all ought to be, but that a few might be spared if the rod was not. There being no means of distinguishing the "few," excepting perhaps the ordinary signs of ill health, which frequently passed for piety, they applied the rod with uniform generosity.

Of course, even as early as the beginning of Ingersoll's career, many parents—and I here refer to them as parents only—had passed far above and

[1] "Spare the rod and spoil the child."—Butler's *Hudibras.*

"He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes."—Proverbs, xiii: 24.

beyond this stage of primitive orthodoxy. They had already emerged from the jungle, and were commencing to breathe the air of freedom,—to welcome the dawn's expanding dome,—to bask in the sunlight of kindness and reason. In short, they were growing somewhat heretical. Instead of putting their "stubborn and rebellious" sons to death, as directed in Exodus and Leviticus;[1] instead of delivering them to the "elders" of the city, to be stoned to death, as directed in Deuteronomy,[2] and in the New England blue-laws,—laws based largely upon the Bible,—they chose to prolong their lives and "break" their "wills," in accordance with the more humane, if less scriptural, teachings of some such gentle kindergarten advocate as John Wesley, for example. To be sure, it often happened that this preference for the Wesleyan method produced precisely the same result that was formerly produced by the more strictly biblical method. But even so, the parents could console themselves with the blessed thought, that both methods bore the orthodox sanction; and that even if, in the application of the more modern one, the exigencies of the case concerned required the exercise of seemingly undue zeal, they had done what they conceived to be their "level best."

Thus in the average orthodox home, the idea of arbitrary and humiliating obedience, born of

[1] Exod. xxi : 15–17; Lev. xx : 9.
[2] Deut. xxi : 18–21.

tyranny and "original sin," was carried out in detailed perfection. From the iron throne of Jehovah in heaven, to the cradle of the tenderest babe on earth, the chain of cruelty hung unbroken. The husband lived "in fear and trembling," at the frightful mercy of Jehovah; the wife, at the mercy of both Jehovah and the husband; the children, at the mercy of all. They were the sport and prey, the helpless galley-slaves, of orthodoxy. Under such conditions, the ideal family life,—the ideal child-life,—was not only unknown, but impossible. The sky was overcast; the clouds seemed always lowering, the atmosphere gloomy and oppressive. Though the day seemed long, the night came early; and the real hearth-fire was out: it had never been kindled. The parents, fearing the untimely removal of their children as a jealous judgment of Jehovah, often withheld from them their natural love. The parental affection of children thus reared scarcely differed in kind or degree from that which the whipped cur manifests for its master.

If we apply here what seems to be the supreme test of nobility, namely, that the commiseration of an individual is invariably in direct ratio to the helplessness of its object, we shall scarcely need to be told, that, against the old ideas of rearing children,—against the Wesleyan nursery methods,—Ingersoll revolted with as intense indignation as against orthodox Christianity itself. Indeed, we shall readily perceive that his "gospel of the fire-

side" was not circumscribed by the relations of husband and wife, but that it encompassed, with a beneficence as wide as it was tender, the cradle of even the lowliest babe. He says:—

"If women have been slaves, what shall I say of children; of the little children in alleys and sub-cellars; the little children who turn pale when they hear their father's footsteps; the little children who run away when they only hear their names called by the lips of a mother; little children—the children of poverty, the children of crime, the children of brutality, wherever they are—flotsam and jetsam upon the wild, mad sea of life—*my heart goes out to them, one and all.*" (i 372)[1]

Passing from this declaration of sympathy and commiseration to his ideas and teachings on the subject of childhood, we find that the latter, like the rest of his philosophy, are preëminently sane, natural, and humane—the unified product of a perfectly logical brain and a perfectly human heart—the triune efflorescence of reason, compassion, and love of the ideal. Nothing is more evident in any of his works than is this fact throughout his utterances concerning the treatment of children. Wherever he touches the subject, purposively or incidentally, it is clarified and ennobled by the inimitable Ingersollian garnishment of reason and beauty.

In the first place, since no one is born of his own volition, Ingersoll taught, as a fundamental proposition of reason and justice, that every babe should be sincerely welcomed. Not in even the remotest

[1] The italics are mine.

sense should it be regarded or treated as either a theological charge or an economic burden. Next to maternity itself stood, in his tender and sympathetic regard, the helplessness and innocence of childhood. Gifted, like the born poet that he was, with imaginative sympathy which enabled him, for the time, to live and love, to yearn and suffer, as a little child, and perceiving, as only the intuitive philosopher can, how absolutely dependent is the salvation of the future upon the cradles of the present, he believed and taught that "a child should know no more sorrow than a bird or a flower." This was but a natural idealistic sequence of his fundamental declaration, that every babe should be sincerely welcomed. For the sweet children,—the stainless flowers of human kind,—he would have the air and light of liberty,—the sunshine of love and affection,—everywhere. Concerning the old idea, that "little children should be seen, not heard"; that they should always be somewhat serious; and that, at table, they should deport themselves as though eating were a religious ceremony, he said:—

> "I like to see the children at table, and hear each one telling of the wonderful things he has seen and heard. I like to hear the clatter of knives and forks and spoons mingling with their happy voices. I had rather hear it than any opera that was ever put upon the boards. Let the children have liberty. Be honest and fair with them; be just; be tender, and they will make you rich in love and joy." (i 388)

He spurned the very thought of limiting their

happiness, as is shown by this matchless eloquence, aimed at the Puritan Sabbath—the day which cast so dark a shadow over his own boyhood :—

"The laugh of a child will make the holiest day more sacred still. Strike with hand of fire, O weird musician! thy harp strung with Apollo's golden hair; fill the vast cathedral aisles with symphonies sweet and dim, deft toucher of the organ keys; blow, bugler, blow, until the silver notes do touch and kiss the moonlit waves, and charm the lovers wandering midst the vine-clad hills : but know, your sweetest strains are discords all, compared with childhood's happy laugh—the laugh that fills the eyes with light and every heart with joy. O rippling river of laughter! thou art the blessed boundary line between the beasts and men; and every wayward wave of thine doth drown some fretful fiend of care. O Laughter! rose-lipped daughter of Joy, make dimples enough in thy cheeks to catch and hold and glorify all the tears of grief." (*Prose-Poems and Selections*, p. 184)

And so, with Ingersoll, the happiness of childhood was of transcendent importance.

As to the general conduct of children, he knew that, in at least one fundamental respect, the latter are precisely like their elders—they seek happiness, according to their light; and he believed that if, in this purely natural course, mistakes are made, they call, not for the qualities of a parental Torquemada or martinet, but for reason and justice, as in the case of adults, and for something more—affection. He said :—

"I tell you the children have the same rights that we have, and we ought to treat them as though they were human beings. They should be reared with love, with kindness, with tenderness, and not with brutality." (i 372)

He denounced the heartless, infamous doctrine, that children can be "spoiled" with love and affection. Indeed, it was these very influences, guided by intelligence, that he proposed as the only agency of correction or reformation :—

"When your child commits a wrong, take it in your arms; let it feel your heart beat against its heart; let the child know that you really and truly and sincerely love it. Yet some Christians, good Christians, when a child commits a fault, drive it from the door and say: 'Never do you darken this house again.' Think of that! And then these same people will get down on their knees and ask God to take care of the child they have driven from home. I will never ask God to take care of my children unless I am doing my level best in that same direction.

"But I will tell you what I say to my children: 'Go where you will; commit what crime you may; fall to what depth of degradation you may; you can never commit any crime that will shut my door, my arms, or my heart to you. As long as I live you shall have one sincere friend.'" (i 374)

After the preceding, it may be well, in the interest of those who would retain their children beneath the native roof-tree, to quote the following:—

"* * * Make your home happy. Be honest with them. Divide fairly with them in everything.

"Give them a little liberty and love, and you can not drive them out of your house. They will want to stay there. * * *

" * * * do not commence at the cradle and shout 'Don't!' 'Don't!' 'Stop!' That is nearly all that is said to a child from the cradle until he is twenty-one years old, and when he comes of age other people begin saying 'Don't!' And the church says 'Don't!' and the party he belongs to says 'Don't!'

"I despise that way of going through this world. Let us have liberty—just a little. Call me infidel, call me atheist, call me what

you will, I intend so to treat my children, that they can come to my grave and truthfully say: 'He who sleeps here never gave us a moment of pain. From his lips, now dust, never came to us an unkind word.'" (i 375)

This resolution, so manly, so noble, so near to pathos in its tenderness, leaves in the mind no doubt, that, of all the hideous, inhuman features of the old doctrine of rearing children, the idea of corporal punishment—"the gospel of ferule and whips," as he termed it—filled Ingersoll with greatest indignation. Possessing a heart that instinctively shrank from the infliction of pain; dowered with imaginative sympathy that not only enabled but impelled him to put himself in the place of others, even of babes, the mental picture of parents beating and scarring their own flesh was one which he could not contemplate with toleration:—

"Think of being fed and clothed by children you had whipped—whose flesh you had scarred! Think of feeling in the hour of death upon your withered lips, your withered cheeks, the kisses and the tears of one whom you had beaten—upon whose flesh were still the marks of your lash!" (vi 513)

Whether "conscience is born of love," as stated by Shakespeare, and just what weight we should attach to Ingersoll's suggestion that conduct depends upon the imagination, it may be difficult to say; but it does seem certain, that, if all possessed imagination equal to his, there would be no beaters of babes.

Notwithstanding the strong influence which sentiment exerted in his revolt at the idea of corporal punishment, just as strong if not stronger influence was exerted by reason. For here, again, "his brain took counsel of his heart." This is clearly and forcibly evident in many a passage like the following:—

"The man who cannot raise children without whipping them ought not to have them. The man who would mar the flesh of a boy or girl is unfit to have the control of a human being. The father who keeps a rod in his house keeps a relic of barbarism in his heart. There is nothing reformatory in punishment; nothing reformatory in fear. Kindness, guided by intelligence, is the only reforming force. An appeal to brute force is an abandonment of love and reason, and puts father and child upon a savage equality; the savageness in the heart of the father prompting the use of the rod or club, produces a like savageness in the victim." (vii 173)

These splendid convictions—these royal children of the heart and brain—often found expression in rare rhetorical form. Was more pungent irony, more humiliating satire, than the following ever used in a sweeter, manlier cause?—

"I do not believe in the government of the lash. If any one of you ever expects to whip your children again, I want you to have a photograph taken of yourself when you are in the act, with your face red with vulgar anger, and the face of the little child, with eyes swimming in tears and the little chin dimpled with fear, like a piece of water struck by a sudden cold wind. Have the picture taken. If that little child should die, I cannot think of a sweeter way to spend an autumn afternoon than to go out to the cemetery, when the maples are clad in tender gold, and little scarlet runners are coming, like poems of regret, from the sad heart of the earth—and sit down upon the grave and look at that photograph, and think of the flesh now dust that you beat." (i 375)

And why, it may be asked in passing, did he suggest "an autumn afternoon"? Because afternoon, the death of day, the retrospective time, and autumn, the death of nature, the season of sadness, make all sad things seem doubly so. He suggested an autumn afternoon because he was a poet and artist, who, unlike the other great reformers (as already pointed out), instinctively clothed his profoundest moral and intellectual convictions in the garments of ideal beauty.

As showing further, and perhaps even more intimately, his tender regard for childhood, the following letters to Mr. and Mrs. John C. Ingersoll, at the death of their son, are of interest here [1]:—

"400 FIFTH AVENUE, Dec. 20, '91.

"DEAR JOHN AND LOLLA:

"I know that your hearts are almost broken over the death of dear little Walston—and I know that I can say nothing that can save you a tear. But there is one thing in which there is at least a ray of comfort:—The dear little fellow had no fear, and went away on the outflowing tide of sleep. He had not lived long enough to have a dread of death. That is something in which there is a little comfort. He is now beyond all suffering, and that is a sweet thought. But whether there is any comfort or not, I know that you must bear the burden. I wish I could help you, but I cannot. All I can say is that I love you both, and that my heart feels your grief. All send love to you and yours and to the dear babe that lies asleep.

"Yours always,

"ROBERT."

A day later, prevented from being present:—

[1] Mr. John C. Ingersoll, who died in 1903, at Colon, Colombia, while American consul there, was the son of the late Hon. Ebon Clark Ingersoll.

"* * * There are no words deep enough and tender enough to soften your grief, or to lighten your burden. I know that the stars have all gone out, and the world seems poor and barren. * * * Time, of course, will in some little degree dull the edge of pain. I wish I could write words of meaning enough to lessen your sense of loss. But I cannot. I know how I should feel under like circumstances, and so I know that my words are nothing. But I love you both. Kiss the dear babe Walston for me. * * * "

Still later:—

"Had it been possible, I should have been with you when you laid little Walston to rest. I thought of you all the day. I know that you will bear it because you cannot choose, but it seems almost a sacrilege for me to write about your loss. * * * A world with death in it is an awful world—but we are compelled to carry our burdens, and the best way is to forget if we can. * * * My heart goes out to the mother that has buried her babe."

These letters, which recall, in sympathy and pathos, the wondrous words of "Whence and Whither?" in Chapter V, could be greatly multiplied.

No less characteristically radical, interesting, and valuable than his ideas of the purely domestic side of rearing children are his ideas of the more intellectual aspect of the problem. Here also love, liberty, and honesty,—the last two especially,—should constitute, according to him, the prevailing influence. Of the necessity for mental honesty, he says:—

"Let us be honest. Let us preserve the veracity of our souls. Let education commence in the cradle—in the lap of the loving mother. This is the first school. The teacher, the mother, should be absolutely honest.

"The nursery should not be an asylum for lies.

"Parents should be modest enough to be truthful—honest enough to admit their ignorance. Nothing should be taught as true that cannot be demonstrated." (iv 106)

And of the necessity for mental liberty:—

"We have no right to enslave our children. We have no right to bequeath chains and manacles to our heirs. We have no right to leave a legacy of mental degradation.

"Liberty is the birthright of all. Parents should not deprive their children of the great gifts of nature. We cannot all leave lands and gold to those we love; but we can leave Liberty, and that is of more value than all the wealth of India." (xii 325)

Paradoxical as it will appear to some, there was in his plea for the liberty of childhood an earnest plea for a restriction of that very liberty. Speaking only a few months before his death, he observed:—

"William Kingdon Clifford, one of the greatest men of this century, said: 'If there is one lesson that history forces upon us in every page, it is this: Keep your children away from the priest, or he will make them the enemies of mankind.'

"In every orthodox Sunday-school children are taught to believe in devils. Every little brain becomes a menagerie, filled with wild beasts from hell. The imagination is polluted with the deformed, the monstrous and malicious. To fill the minds of children with leering fiends—with mocking devils—is one of the meanest and basest of crimes. In these pious prisons—these divine dungeons—these Protestant and Catholic inquisitions—children are tortured with these cruel lies. Here they are taught that to really think is wicked; that to express your honest thought is blasphemy; and that to live a free and joyous life, depending on fact instead of faith, is the sin against the Holy Ghost.

"Children thus taught—thus corrupted and deformed—become the enemies of investigation—of progress. They are no longer true to themselves. They have lost the veracity of the soul. In the language of Professor Clifford, 'they are the enemies of the human race.'

"So I say to all fathers and mothers, keep your children away from priests; away from orthodox Sunday-schools; away from the slaves of superstition." (iv 410)

This was the restriction, and the only restriction, for which he pleaded—a restriction of physical liberty for the sake of mental and moral freedom.

With the children thus protected at the start from the warping, blighting, degrading influences of superstition—with "Love the only priest," according to one of his fundamental maxims—and with absolute mental honesty and perfect mental liberty the aim and gift of every parent, Ingersoll would undertake the realization of the public educational reforms and ideals indicated in Chapter XII. He would undertake the mental, moral, and physical development—harmonious and unified—of every child. He would undertake the process, not merely of "universal education," which is already advocated and practised by even the narrowest sects, but the process of *educating the child universally*, which has never been practised nor advocated by any sect, nor allowed in even a secular public school. He would undertake the realization of a curriculum in which nature, and nature only, should bound the intellectual horizon of the pupil. He would commence at the cradle. In the sunlight of love, in the open air of honesty and liberty, he would shape the lever of "real education"—"the only lever capable of raising mankind."

CHAPTER XVII.

DID HE PRACTISE WHAT HE PREACHED?

IT IS, or rather, it ought to be universally recognized, as a fundamental principle, that a precept or a doctrine is valuable solely for what it is in itself. Precepts and doctrines in the realm of logic, of ethics,—of philosophy in general,—like commodities in the realm of commerce, are worth precisely what they in themselves will bring. They neither gain nor lose, from the viewpoint of pure reason, because of the morality or the immorality, the sincerity or the insincerity, of him who professes or proclaims them. The multiplication table, recited parrot-like by one who could not correctly apply it in a simple problem, would be quite as true as if recited by a Descartes or a Newton. The Golden Rule, repeated by the most abandoned and dissolute of wretches, would be just as safe a moral guide as if it fell from the lips of Confucius or of Christ.

But, unfortunately, the average man is not yet a thoroughly logical being; and, consequently, he is apt to value the things that he reads or hears, not at what they themselves are worth, but at what

they themselves are worth, plus or minus the personal worth of him who professes or proclaims them. Thus is impersonal philosophy debited or credited with the personality of the philosopher; the impersonal message, with the personality of the man.

But if mankind is chargeable with illogic in failing to distinguish philosophy from the philosopher, it is, conversely, to be credited with judging the philosopher himself, not by his philosophy alone, but by his philosophy and his conduct together. It is to be credited with judging, not by theories, but by theories and acts; not by words, but by words and deeds; not by mentality, but by mentality and manhood. It demands not only ideals, but a practical application of ideals. It recognizes, that, while it is "a great thing to preach philosophy," it is "far greater to live it." Hence the triteness of the query, "Does he practise what he preaches?" If the latter elicits an affirmative answer, mankind accepts the philosopher concerned; if a negative answer, it rejects him—too often his philosophy included.

Now, we have examined, somewhat at length, the philosophy of Ingersoll. We have pointed out his ideals. We have ascertained his views of the most important subjects of daily human interest. We have studied his "gospel of the fireside," and his "religion of humanity." We have read his advice concerning the treatment of wife and child, of the

poor and unfortunate, and of the criminal. And we have seen, that his ideal was lofty; that his views were reasonable; that his advice was sound and good. In other words, we have concluded that his philosophy was of the highest, the noblest, and the best.

But perhaps we have not fully decided as to the philosopher himself. It is therefore peculiarly fitting that we now ask concerning Ingersoll the usual question, "Did he practise what he preached?"

Those whose knowledge of his personal life has not been acquired wholly from the incidental references thereto in the preceding chapters will surely appreciate the sense of delicacy which any writer must feel in undertaking a reply to the query just propounded. What, enter unbidden the sacred precincts of the fireside king! Standing upon this mental threshold, I feel that one who would take a forward step should wear the white robes of perfection—that he should be clad in vestments of devotion already consecrated at the innermost shrine of the ideal!

As stated in Chapter III, Ingersoll was married on February 13, 1862, at Groveland, Tazewell County, Ill., to Miss Eva A. Parker. He was then twenty-eight years of age.

Accepting as true the adage, that "all the world loves a lover," this marriage must have been blessed with far more than the usual abundance of well-wishes; for it is morally certain, that,

should we begin even before Shakespeare's time,—with the earliest predecessors of *Romeo* and *Juliet*,—we should not be able to find, either in literature or in life, a more perfect example of mutual devotion than that with which Robert Ingersoll and Eva Parker enriched the annals of human affection. And, whether we accept or reject the other adage, or rather, the teleological notion, that men and women are "*made* for each other," we must admit that here were a man and a woman who, in effect at least, had *lived* and *waited*, and would continue to live, for each other. Not only was theirs a perfect union of hearts: it was a perfect union of minds—an ideal blending of love and intellectual sympathies. For, as stated in the chapter last mentioned, the Parkers, for generations, had been Freethinkers; and Eva A. Parker was not an exception in this respect. Unusually endowed with intelligence and the spirit of humanity and freedom—"a woman without superstition," to quote her husband's exact words of her—she was to Robert Ingersoll (again quoting his words) "the one of all the world."

But kind as was fortune in effecting a union so perfect, so absolutely ideal, she did not cease her beneficent ministrations; and two daughters came to enhance and share the joys of the Ingersoll fireside. They were Eva R., born at Groveland, and Maud R., born at Peoria. The first and elder became, in 1889, the wife of Mr. Walston H. Brown,

the banker and railroad-builder. But she did not thereupon pass from the family circle which included her distinguished father. There was no table of subtraction in the Ingersollian domestic arithmetic; and so, instead of one's being taken away by the ofttimes cruel god of marriage, simply another chair was drawn at the fireside of the Great Agnostic.

To say of the children of most men,—of even the children of most great men,—that they love and respect and admire their father, would doubtless do full justice to the facts. Not so of the daughters of Ingersoll: they did far more. In childhood they loved him; in youth they adored him; in womanhood they adored and admired him as the one ideal embodiment of domestic affection and moral and intellectual grandeur. For, although enjoying in religious matters, in accordance with the Ingersollian Golden Rule, "every right" that their parents claimed for themselves, they became, on reaching the age of intellectual discretion and have since steadfastly remained, in keeping with their maternal traditions, in full and perfect accord with the opinions and teachings of their father. "We all feel," wrote Mrs. Eva R. Ingersoll-Brown, in expression of the sentiments, not only of herself and sister, but of her mother and, in fact, the entire household, "that he is doing the greatest and noblest work of this world."

It must ever seem useless to postulate what

might or might not have occurred in the life of a given genius but for the one or the other fact or circumstance. It will seem doubly useless to whomever accepts the philosophy, that "all that has been possible has happened." Nevertheless, I cannot pass this point without at least suggesting the speculation as to what share of the world's gratitude for the wealth of courage and heroism, of elevating and ennobling sentiment, and of artistic beauty, with which Ingersoll dowered mankind, is due to the three (particularly the first of the three) noble women who completed the circle around 'the holy hearth of his home.' Had fate decreed that Robert Ingersoll should walk alone life's hard, uncertain path, he might still have walked the intellectual giant, the friend of justice, and the fearless advocate and invincible champion of physical and mental liberty. He might have carried the torch of reason, the shield of truth; and the embattled hosts of injustice, bigotry, and superstition, pierced by the deadly arrows of his logic—arrows sweetly poisoned with scorn and satire—might still have fallen in their last pangs, or, mortally wounded, have skulked to cover on either side. He might, and doubtless would, have given to us what is most intellectual in a score or more of the great productions previously mentioned; but it seems equally certain, that, had it not been for the wife, in whom he realized his heart's ideal, and for the wife and the daughters together, whose affectionate sympathy,

constantly sustaining, moved him now to tender expression, now to lofty resolve—for the wife and daughters, who made his domestic life one long sweet symphony—the world would have lost its greatest champion of the fireside, and the greatest prose-poet of our tongue; that the highest and best in the productions to which I refer would not have been uttered; and that many others, as entireties, would not now enrich our literature and our lives. Let us therefore thank the three women, who, hopeless of the laurel and the crown, so nobly did their part in sustaining and inspiring him who will be ardently praised and lovingly remembered till all language is barren and all hearts are dust.

Referring now more specifically to the query as to whether Ingersoll practised the philosophy which he taught, let us first view him as the center of his household. This, although it naturally varied in size, was always very large. Besides Ingersoll himself, it consisted of Mrs. Ingersoll, Miss Ingersoll, Mr. and Mrs. Walston H. Brown and their children (Eva Ingersoll and Robert G. Ingersoll), Mrs. Ingersoll's mother (Mrs. Benjamin Weld Parker), Mr. Clinton Pinckney Farrell, who sustained to Ingersoll the various relations of private secretary, traveling companion, publisher, etc., Mrs. Farrell (Mrs. Ingersoll's sister), their daughter (Eva Ingersoll), Miss Sue Sharkey, and others. To this number are to be added "a small army" of indi-

viduals in the several capacities of tutor, governess, servant, etc.

There is a saying, as trite as it too often is true, that no house is large enough for two families. Yet here was a house which held not two but four families, four generations, in perfect harmony and content. Nothing could have induced them to dwell apart.

In his home, out of hearing and sight of the world, Robert G. Ingersoll was absolutely true to his ideal,—to each and all of the domestic precepts and doctrines, which, publicly taught and professed by him, have been quoted in the preceding chapters. His honeymoon lasted till death. He sought to make his home a heaven, and he succeeded. There all the refining, ennobling, and inspiring influences of past and present,—of science, philosophy, sculpture, painting, poetry, and music,—blended with the artless, ineffable charm of a great personality to create for a fortunate few the fairest place of earth. There, at last, was a home where *Shakespeare* was the Bible, *Burns* the hymn-book, and their most devoted reader a mingling of both. There did the humanitarian, philosopher, and poet realize his fondest dream. There, at last, was the real republic, the ideal democracy—a realm where love was the only law—a realm from whose radiant center there fell upon all a spirit as benign, as halcyon, as joyful as June's most perfect day.

Ingersoll's devotion to home was absolute, it being manifested even to the extent of relieving his wife of the usual household responsibilities and cares. In this, he was as proficient, as resourceful, as much himself,—in short, as supreme,—as in the realms of intellect and art.

Those who are familiar with *About Farming in Illinois* will recall that he emphasizes the relation which cooking bears to civilization :—

"The inventor of a good soup did more for his race than the maker of any creed." (i 432)

Hence these directions for broiling beefsteak on a stove :—

"Shut the front damper—open the back one—then take off a griddle. There will then be a draft downwards through this opening. Put on your steak, using a wire broiler, and not a particle of smoke will touch it, for the reason that the smoke goes down. If you try to broil it with the front damper open, the smoke will rise. For broiling, coal, even soft coal, makes a better fire than wood." (i 432)

Surely a unique deliverance for the author of the many wondrous words quoted in preceding chapters! And yet he was speaking from practical experience.

Nor was his knowledge of cooking limited to this recipe : he was adept in the several branches of the culinary art. And when, during the early years of his married life, the household cook chanced to be absent, as on a Sunday afternoon, Ingersoll did not feel that he was measuring to his ideal of de-

votion unless he sacrificed the delights of the study or of the parlor, and entered into active operations in the kitchen. The success of these operations, it is said, was so well attested as markedly to diminish the reputation of the regular cook.

His relief of Mrs. Ingersoll from the usual annoyances incident to the management of servants was equally characteristic. If, for example, it happened that one of them had been careless or delinquent, she would be reproved with a kindliness, a gentle irony, which, revealing to her, without the slightest offense, her shortcomings, would not only produce the desired effect, but would leave her with an added sense of gratitude to her genial employer. However, it was seldom necessary to resort to even this gentle procedure; for the employees of the Ingersoll household served with rare faithfulness. And at the time of his death, several negro men journeyed from Washington to Dobbs' Ferry, that they might look once more upon the face of him in whose employ, as servants, in years gone by, they had felt the warmth of genuine human kindness.

In all the evidence of Ingersoll's domestic devotion, nothing is more notable than that every possible hour was spent at home. Once there, he remained until unavoidably called away, when, if possible, he took with him one or all of his loved ones. If unaccompanied, he lost no opportunity for speedy return. He sometimes resorted to very

unique means of returning. For example, during the early years of his forensic career, he was frequently called from Peoria in connection with cases that required his daily attention for a considerable period. It often happened, that, by the time he concluded his legal labors for the day, the last train for Peoria had departed; and the distance involved would be too great to cover with the usual conveyance. He would thereupon telegraph to the railroad authorities for a "light" locomotive, and return in its cab to Peoria.

His relations with his children were invariably those of sweet and affectionate companionship. He was oak and sunshine to the violets beneath,—with no shadows, clouds, or rain. His private practice in this regard tallied exactly with his unique public advice. His method consisted in seeking and developing goodness,—not in condemning "badness,"—in the nature of the child. It was the method of sympathy. He would praise and reward, but he would not blame nor censure. He recognized that the child's actions have necessary causes in physical and mental states. Accordingly, if one of his little children was doing some mischievous act, he would divert its attention in some kindly way. He would not resort to the usual method of "Don't! Don't! Stop!—You mustn't do that!" etc., which, as we have seen, he so heartily disliked. He knew better than to plant, with "mustn't," the seeds of rebellion in the mind

of a child too young to reason. His children never heard him utter any of these words.

The reader of the preceding chapter will recall the following :—

> "I intend so to treat my children, that they can come to my grave and truthfully say : 'He who sleeps here never gave us a moment of pain. From his lips, now dust, never came to us an unkind word.'"

That prophetic declaration could be absolutely fulfilled but for this circumstance: Ingersoll has no grave. His loved ones would not give back to nature his sacred form. But his children can stand by the urn that holds his ashes "and truthfully say" not only what I have just quoted, but this also: "We never heard our father utter an impatient word, nor a word that we now regret."

And even this touching, this unprecedented tribute, in conjunction with all of similar significance that has preceded it in this chapter, is wholly inadequate to convey a fitting impression of the ideal domestic relations here concerned. Doubtless, therefore, such impression could best be realized, not in further biographical description, but in the words of the incomparable husband and father himself. It could best be realized in those wondrous messages of affection, of adoration, which now and then, during a long period of years, passed from Ingersoll as an itinerant propagandist, to those who remained behind at 'the holy hearth of his home.' But to reproduce those messages,—to enter,

by baring their golden threads, the sacred place of affection,—would involve a sacrilege the mere thought of which it were impossible to entertain. At the same time, to undertake the impression which I have mentioned, and to which it almost seems that the world is entitled, by way of ethical example, would be to commit, through sheer inadequacy, a sacrilege just as great! Perhaps a compromise on the middle ground of such meager extracts as will follow is a pardonable solution.

It has already been stated, that Ingersoll's relations with his children were invariably those of sweet and affectionate companionship. That this is but feebly descriptive of the relations mentioned, however, is evident in such letters as the one from which the following fragment is taken:—

"Words cannot express the feelings I have for you [Eva] and Maud and mother. You are the Trinity that I adore. All that I am capable of loving I love you. * * * We will be together in a few days."

And:—

"When I think of mother and you and Maud in that house, it seems as though it would emit light in the darkest night."

In the spring of 1891, accompanied by his wife and his younger daughter, Maud, he was on the westward journey of his second trip of that year to Montana; but an extract from a letter, or prose-poem, rather, written at St. Paul, on May 16th, to

Eva and her husband, at Dobbs' Ferry-on-Hudson, shows, as characteristically and charmingly, perhaps, as could any similar extract, that, as usual, home and loved ones were not out of his thoughts, nor even his sight:—

"We talk about you both most of the time. I think of you as looking away across the shining river, at the shadowy and billowy hills, lost in the purple of distance—of you down in that garden, where every leaf is the promise of some joy, and where, it seems to me, that everything will be glad to grow *for you*—of you watching those cows standing beneath the apple-trees, the blossoms falling at their feet—and, above all, of you both loving each other."

And then, only four days later (having arrived at Butte), the invariable longing to return:—

"Another day nearer home. That is the first thought each morning. It will only be a few more, and then we will sit together at 'Walston' and watch for the cantaloupes to grow.[1] * * * We will have a long summer together—many, many beautiful days."

On the 23d he writes, from Helena, happy that on the following morning "we are to turn our faces towards yours." Well on his way, another of those charming and inimitable prose-poems in the form of a letter is written at St. Paul, on the 26th:—

"Here we are in the 'East' again. * * * We are in perfect health, * * * and feel that we are nearer home. St. Paul seems close to New York—nearer to Dobbs' Ferry. We had a beautiful journey from

[1] Ingersoll once remarked, in elucidation of his necessitarian philosophy of blaming no one for doing "as he must": "I do not blame a gourd for not being a cantaloupe, but I like cantaloupes." (viii 478)

Helena—no dust—the plains as green as paradise—everything lovely, and along the road the larks were singing. We talk about you both. We say: 'They are eating breakfast.' 'It is bedtime now at Dobbs' Ferry.' 'They are probably in the garden.' And so we go on gabbling about the ones we love above all others in the wide world; and when I lie down at night I can hear Eva say: 'Can you go to sleep?' 'Good night.' 'Do you feel well?'—Well, good night; and the voice sounds as though there were only love in the world. * * * "

And then—the arrival; but that, undescribed by Ingersoll himself, is better left, by him who would write, to the reverential fancy of him who reads.

"How happy I was when the girls were babes!" wrote Ingersoll to a nephew, on August 9, 1890. "Well, I am happy still. I am now reaping the harvest of my life. The house is filled with affection, and we are all really happy. I hope that you will be as joyous at 57 as I am now."

Another interesting indication that his happiness continued after his own babes, as such, were replaced by grandchildren is furnished by a "fragment" which was written on the first anniversary of Eva Ingersoll-Brown. The fragment also furnishes a glimpse of the playful, sunny spirit of its author in his home:—

"One year of perfect health—of countless smiles—of wonder and surprise—of growing thought and love—was duly celebrated on this day, and all paid tribute to the infant queen. There were whirling things that scattered music as they turned—and boxes filled with tunes—and curious animals of whittled wood—and ivory rings with tinkling bells—and little dishes for a fairy-feast—horses that rocked, and bleating sheep and monstrous elephants of painted tin. A baby-tender, for a tender babe, garments of silk and cushions wrought with

flowers, and pictures of her mother when a babe—and silver dishes for another year—and coach and four and train of cars—and bric-a-brac for a baby's house—and last of all, a pearl, to mark her first round year of life and love." (xii 353)

Quite as interesting, for the same reasons, is the following letter, written five years later:—

"The Arlington,
"Hot Springs, Ark., Feb'y 16th, 1898.

"Dear Eva and Robbie:

"We received your sweet letter this morning, and we are glad to hear that you love us and want us to come home. We will see you in a few days and tell you where we have been and what we have seen. We have been over the prairies and bridges, and through the forests, and in the towns and cities. We have seen thousands of men, women, and children, and lots of babes; but we have seen no girl and boy as sweet as you. This is a beautiful day, and Grandma and I are going to take a walk. The sun is shining, and the sky is blue as Robbie's eyes and as bright as Eva's smile. We love you both and would like to hug and kiss you this morning. Kiss mamma and papa for us, and tell them to be good—as good as you are, and that will be good enough. I hope you had good dreams last night. Hope you have had the cow mended, and that all the dolls and animals are well—that no legs are broken. As soon as I get back I will eat some baked apples with you and give you both a lot of whipped cream. We will have gay times. Give our love to grandmother Parker, and to Eva Farrell and her mother, and to aunt Maud, and *Judy with her beautiful nose*, and to Annie.

"Well, good-bye. Love and kisses for you both. Your letters make us happy.

"We love you.

"Grandma and Grandpa."

The pecuniary features of Ingersoll's domestic philosophy were carried out in a very characteristic way. One of the drawers of a particular bureau served as a household bank, the contents of which

were replenished from time to time with odd amounts—greater or less, as circumstances might prompt. Without key or accountant, this unique monetary institution, with one depositor, was equally accessible to all. Wife and children were simply told by husband and father, that what was his was theirs. He did this that they might be free from the necessity of asking for money. He desired that their pecuniary liberty, so to speak, as well as their liberty in all other respects, should be absolute. At the same time, as regards his children, he preferred, for ethical reasons, that they should not have the actual handling of money—lest they might come to care for it in itself. Instead, therefore, of being put to the necessity of availing themselves of the very liberty which they so well knew was theirs, namely, the privileges of the "household bank," they were accompanied to the "shops" and there told to select what they wished.

The ethical result of this method was the very one that their father had hoped to attain. The children, knowing that they were at liberty to draw upon the common fund at any time, rarely did so,—rarely had money in their personal possession,—and, consequently, never acquired the mental attitude which tends to make of money a fetich. Similarly with respect to the things that money could procure: knowing that they might have whatever they chose, they seldom asked for anything, and never for anything unreasonable.

In fact, they were very economical, it being their constant aim to avoid putting any unnecessary burden upon their noble and generous father. Their solicitude in this regard was also manifest in the care of things with which they or the household in common had already been provided. Here again, knowing that if they chanced to break or mar a doll or a dish or a piece of furniture no blame would attach, they were unusually careful; and when such an accident did occur, they felt it even to the keenest sorrow. All this could only have been due to the ideal relations which they enjoyed—to affection, justice, and freedom—to the restraint of liberty.

Very often, at the conclusion of lectures in which Ingersoll had set forth his doctrine of domestic finance, people would gather about him and say that they could never treat their children as he had taught.

"Why," some man would declare, "my children would rob me—bankrupt me!"

"That would be because you had not treated them rightly at the start," Ingersoll would reply, in effect. "But take your children aside and have a good honest talk with them. Tell them that you are going to give them a little liberty, and that if they do not abuse it, it will continue."

Sometimes the advice given in the lectures themselves required no supplemental remarks. To mention a case in point: A United States senator

from one of the Pacific states had disowned his daughter in his will, because she married contrary to his wishes. He had not spoken to her for twenty years. It chanced that Ingersoll visited the senator's place of residence and delivered *The Liberty of Man, Woman, and Child.* After hearing the latter, the aged senator went home and wrote to his daughter. He told her that he had just heard a lecture which had convinced him that he was "an old fool." He begged her forgiveness, and asked that she come to him. But he did not await her arrival: he took a carriage that night and drove to her home, a long distance, reaching his destination at some unseemly hour.

The ennobling effect of the lecture just mentioned has often been remarked. It has been said, for instance, that a man on his way home from hearing it would, if possible, purchase some gift or other for his family.

An intimate associate of Ingersoll has stated, that he himself was never able to sit with the audience during a delivery of the lecture, without being moved to tears, because he knew that its every word came straight from the orator's heart, and was lived during every moment of his life.

The wife of a certain prominent citizen of Illinois, although herself a Christian, would never permit a detractor of Ingersoll to go unrebuked in her presence, because the latter's influence upon her husband had been so elevating and ennobling.

The remaining space of this volume might be devoted to similar cases and incidents. But enough concerning this single phase of Ingersoll's character. For it is already evident, that the influence of his teachings and of his great personality, radiating beyond the ideal circle in which he dwelt, made for the domestic ideal in the remotest parts of the continent.

Hardly less notable than his devotion to his family was his devotion to his friends. His heart, his purse, his house, his great prestige, his most arduous intellectual endeavors, were freely theirs. Probably no other man ever had greater capacity for friendship. To know him was to be his friend forever.

Innumerable as were his misguided enemies, his personal friends were legion. And what a miscellaneous assembly they would have made! They represented nearly every race, every reputable vocation, every social stage. In official life, they ranged from president to messenger, from general to private, from admiral to landsman; in commerce, from the president of the great railway-system to the clerk; in literature, from the poet to the penny-a-liner. Inventors, jurists, physicians, painters, actors, musicians, were his friends; and all loved him with wondrous devotion. Each of them who survives can say, with *Mark Twain*: "His was a great and beautiful spirit; he was a man—all man, from his crown to his foot-soles. My reverence for

him was deep and genuine. I prized his affection for me, and returned it with usury."

Whether in Peoria, in Washington, or in New York, the home of Ingersoll was an attractive and ever-welcoming center. Indeed, few were his notable contemporaries who had not experienced the rare delights of an evening there. For it was not, like so many other luxurious homes, a rendezvous for the mentally commonplace. Its attractions were for individualities—for such as have, in all ages and lands, been accustomed to think and to act. They possessed little capacity for polite fatuities and the private affairs of others; and even had they inclined to the latter, they would have been wasting their precious hours. For their host entertained a most hearty dislike for social gossip. It was utterly beneath him. 'It is just as easy to be familiar with the history of Julius Cæsar,' he would say, in effect, 'as to be familiar with the affairs of your next-door neighbor.' Hence the topics of conversation were of the most substantial and engaging sort. They would have interested women like de Staël and George Eliot, and men like Voltaire, Goethe, Burns, Huxley, Emerson, and Lincoln. How much they interested men of lesser note is a matter of social history. Thus in Washington, of a Sunday evening (always the "at-home" evening of the Ingersolls), men of national and international reputation —prominent members of the House and of the Senate, members of the Cabinet, etc.—invariably formed

part of the circle of which the great orator was the magnetic center. During "presidential years," it was not unusual to find in the Ingersoll drawing-room a half-dozen prospective candidates for the presidency, absorbed in the discussion of current political questions.

Needless to state, that, in the Ingersoll domestic circle, there was not only the most generous material hospitality: there was genuine intellectual hospitality,—something which, alas, too rarely prevails in the home. A prominent intellectual man who was a frequent caller at the Great Agnostic's used to remark, that it was the only place where he felt free to express his real convictions on all matters whatsoever. He had found, at last, with true appreciation, a circle in which he not only could express his honest thoughts without offense to anyone else, but in which he must express them, if he would enjoy the highest respect of all its members.

If we consider the immensity of Ingersoll's personality, his encyclopedic knowledge, his charm of presence and conversation, we need not tax the fancy to conceive something of the delights of an evening at his fireside. There are individuals who would minify those delights, as far as Ingersoll's conversation is concerned, by charging that he was not a thinker. The truth is, that he was one of the profoundest of thinkers. There were few if any subjects of human interest on which he had not thought deeply, and on which he was not prepared

instantly to express an opinion, whether from the rostrum or from his seat by the hearth. In this he had schooled himself from youth. But it was his misfortune, that he was neither solemn in manner nor ambiguous in expression. If he had only been void of humor, and if his language could only have been misunderstood, he would have been universally regarded as profound. Perspicuity, especially if wedded to humor, has ever been the enemy of philosophic fame.

Despite the depth and the range of his original thought, he read the thoughts of others. It was said by Schopenhauer, that if one wished to become a fool, one should pick up a book at every spare moment. This advice evidently is not always to be relied on; for very rarely did Ingersoll pass a leisure hour without a book.

In this connection should be specially mentioned two features of his remarkable mentality. The first was the faculty of divining just where to extract "the pith and marrow" of the matter before him. Surprising as it would sound to his anti-theological critics, it is said by those who know best that there seemed to be some sort of good demon in attendance to guide him forthwith to the most interesting and profitable parts. He would read a page at a glance; and yet he never appeared to be in a hurry.

The other feature of mentality to which I have referred was memory. He never forgot what he read. Mr. Baldwin, editor of the Peoria *Star*, is

authority for the statement that Ingersoll once repeated from memory, without hesitation or error, and with perfect elocutionary effect, upwards of thirty separate poems which he had read, on the same day, for the first time, in the train between Chicago and Peoria. Mr. Baldwin, unobserved by Ingersoll, held a copy of the poems during the recitation, which was instigated by a Mr. Breed, in his drug-store, in Peoria.

Considering the attributes here briefly indicated, it is hardly surprising that Ingersoll's intimate friends declare, as their conviction, that 'if his private conversations could have been preserved, it would have been better to let the writings go.'[1] "I have been with him on a hundred political platforms," says Colonel Clark E. Carr.[2] "I have heard him many times in literary addresses, always thrilled and moved by such eloquence as could 'haunt the heart, rouse the passions, lull rampant multitudes, scatter to dust the thrones of kings, and effect more wonders than the grandest chorus or the deftest pen,' and still it always seemed to me that Colonel Ingersoll was more sublime in conversation than anywhere else. As Macaulay says, the life of Dr. Johnson is the biography of biographies. Splendid as this biography is, and

[1] *Ingersoll the Man*, a pamphlet, by Clarence S. Brown, a legal associate. P. 5.

[2] Address delivered before the survivors of the Eleventh Illinois Cavalry, Studebaker Hall, Chicago, Aug. 6, 1899.

enchanting as are its pages, it has always seemed to me since I came to know Colonel Ingersoll well, that if some Boswell could have been his constant companion to jot down every day the incidents and what he said in every position and relation of life, he would be able to give to the world a volume more interesting than Boswell's *Life of Johnson*." On several occasions Ingersoll's stenographic secretaries, evidently sharing this opinion, endeavored to suit their action thereto, as far as preserving the conversation was concerned; but they were always prevented from doing so. His inherent modesty would promptly assert itself, as it invariably did in matters of personal biography, and he would say: "I can't allow that," "You will have to stop that." And so, for the most part, those wondrous words of philosophy, of wit and wisdom, of humor and pathos, were lost to the world, and will live but a few brief years in the minds of a fortunate few.

However, with many other words of like nature, addressed to friends through the medium of writing, it has happily been different, as the following letters show. They are typical of their author in the several moods disclosed.

ON RECEIVING A PRESENT OF A VEST.

"PEORIA, Oct. 21, 1863.

"*J. W. Proctor, Esq.*

"DEAR FRIEND: Day before yesterday Messrs. Mawhynter &

French, of this city, handed me an elegant vest, for which, as they informed me, I was indebted to you.

"I must say that I think you made a good investment, at least for me. I thank you for your kindness and hope that you may live long in the enjoyment of all the vestal virtues of life; that your vested rights may never be wrested from you, at least without legal investigation. I also hope that after your death you will not long be kept in the vestibule of the better world, but be allowed to enter heaven at once.

"In conclusion, I am in favor of prosecuting the war until not a vestige remains of the rebellion.

"Yours truly,

"R. G. INGERSOLL.

"Remember me to Dr. McDowell and family." [1]

DECLINING AN INVITATION TO THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY DINNER OF THE CLOVER CLUB, PHILADELPHIA, JANUARY 28, 1883 (TO COLONEL THOMAS DONALDSON).

"I regret that I cannot be 'in clover' with you on the 28th instant.

"A wonderful thing is clover! It means honey and cream,—that is to say, industry and contentment,—that is to say, the happy bees in perfumed fields, and at the cottage gate 'bos' the bountiful serenely chewing satisfaction's cud, in that blessed twilight pause that like a benediction falls between all toil and sleep.

"This clover makes me dream of happy hours; of childhood's rosy cheeks; of dimpled babes; of wholesome, loving wives; of honest men; of springs and brooks and violets and all there is of stainless joy in peaceful human life.

"A wonderful word is 'clover'! Drop the 'c,' and you have the

[1] Mr. Proctor, then a resident of Lewistown, Fulton County, Ill., had prevailed upon Ingersoll to visit Lewistown and deliver a speech to counteract the anti-war sentiment which was rife in Fulton County, and had endeavored to induce the speaker to accept compensation for his services. Failing in the latter, Mr. Proctor went to Ingersoll's tailors, in Peoria, and ordered the vest as a surprise. Dr. McDowell was Ingersoll's host at Lewistown.

happiest of mankind. Drop the 'r,' and 'c,' and you have left the only thing that makes a heaven of this dull and barren earth. Drop the 'r,' and there remains a warm, deceitful bud that sweetens breath and keeps the peace in countless homes whose masters frequent clubs. After all, Bottom was right:

"'Good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow.'

"Yours sincerely and regretfully.

"R. G. INGERSOLL.

"WASHINGTON, D. C., January 16, 1883."

ON RECEIVING A PRESENT OF OPALS.

"November 26, 1885.

"MY DEAR MR. JOHNSTON:

"A thousand thanks for your beautiful gift. Had I dreamed of your doing any such thing, I should never have spoken of the jewels. Now I can only express my surprise, my thanks, and ask you and Mrs. Johnston to come and see them and us.

"Diamonds are cold as intellect; rubies, warm and selfish as desire; but the ominous opal, with its imprisoned fire, is a combination of head and heart—of brain and blood—a mingling of purity and passion—virtue glorified by love.

"Thanking you again and again, and again, saying Come and see us,

"I remain,

"Yours always,

"R. G. INGERSOLL.

"*J. H. Johnston, Esq.*"

ACKNOWLEDGING A GIFT OF CIGARS.

"117 EAST 21ST STREET,

"GRAMERCY PARK, April 14, 1899.

"MY DEAR MAJOR SMITH:

"To-day I opened a box of cigars and found your letter. I read it and said: 'He certainly was good to me.' I am smoking one now, and there starts over me a sense of gratitude—a feeling that I have a friend—that I am not forgotten. Let them say what they will, there

is in tobacco the essence, the aroma of friendship. The 'pipe of peace' is not a savage fancy—it is a civilized and scientific fact. Tobacco is social. It is a medium of mental exchange. The doctors may say that it shortens life—but the longer life is without it, the *worse it is.* The preachers say that to use it is wicked. The reason, and the only one they have, for saying this is that it gives us joy. For my own part, I had rather smoke one cigar than to hear two sermons. In fact I had rather chew 'green twist' than to read the best chapter in Leviticus.

"But whether smoke shortens life or not, whether it puts my soul in peril or not, I send you a thousand thanks for sending me a box of temptations—from which my sincere prayer is *not* to be delivered. I will smoke and think of you.

"Yours always,

"R. G. INGERSOLL." [1]

PRESENTING A COPY OF LES MISÉRABLES.

"NEW YORK, Dec. 30, 1885.

"DEAR PALMER:

"I send you the greatest novel in the world—a novel filled with philosophy, beauty, pathos—with all that is tender, heroic, and dramatic. You will find all the lights and shadows that fall upon the heart—all the buds and blossoms, and all the withered leaves, that belong to Hope and Memory.

"This novel goes over the whole field of human experience—war, religion, politics, love, government, crime, punishment, education, history, and prophecy. It is filled with the divine—that is to say, with pity, with love. The good bishop, the sublime convict, the pure 'sister' Simplice, the purer Fantine—all these contradictions, are higher forms of truth.

"No man can read this book without becoming much better or much worse. This great light will either illumine the soul, or deepen the shadow.

"You will read it with wonder and tears.

"You will finish it with a sigh.

"R. G. INGERSOLL." [2]

[1] From *The Truth Seeker*, July 24, 1909.

[2] Ibid.

TO THE SISTER OF MRS. JOHN C. INGERSOLL, ON THE DEATH OF HER AGED FATHER.

"January 6th, '89.

"My Dear Mamie:

"I know how pathetic death is, and how sudden it always seems, and how lonely and dark the whole world grows. I know that you have had anxious days, and nights filled with terror. You needed company. It was an awful experience to wait for the coming of death. Well, it is all over, and the peace of the infinite has fallen on another of the sons of men. It is not an occasion for sorrow. He had lived his life—the spring, the summer, the autumn, and the last days of winter. For him there could not be another spring. The drama was done, and the curtain fell; and yet I know that death fills all with sorrow. I hope, my dear girl, that the sunlight will fall upon your heart again. Give my love to your mother, and believe me, as ever,

"Your affectionate uncle,

"Robert."

TO MR. JOHN G. MILLS, ON THE DEATH OF HIS FATHER.

"Washington, D. C., May 12, 1881.

"My Dear Mr. Mills:

"I know how poor, weak, and worthless all words are, and forever must be, in the presence of death. I know from experience that human sympathy is 'balm for hurt minds,' and I want you to know that you have mine. After all, there is only the difference of a few beats of the heart between the living and the dead. A little more anxiety, a few more moments of gladness, a few more tears, and the universal fate will be ours. I know what it is to see a father dead, and I now feel that I would like to press your hand.

"Yours always,

"R. G. Ingersoll." [1]

In dealing with strangers, as in intercourse with friends, Ingersoll ever manifested the most admir-

[1] Courtesy of Joseph Ambrose Thompson, M. D., Hyattsville, Md.

able traits. Whether in contact with high public officials, or with employes of railroads and hotels, or with members of the press, his manner and conversation were above criticism. Invariably courteous and considerate,—generous at every opportunity for being so,—he frequently acted the role of friend.

Consider his relations with newspaper men. Aside from the probability that he created for them more work than any other individual publicist, he was, in his personal dealings, one of the very best friends, if not the best friend, that the reporters have ever had. He was the most approachable of men. And not only did he make the interview socially pleasurable, he made it a practical success, for the reporter. He possessed the sense of "news" —knew just what was wanted, and gave it. This is interestingly evidenced by the fact that his permanently published interviews alone, extracted from the press of the United States, Canada, and England, occupy more than seven hundred octavo pages, and deal with almost every subject of human concern. He was interviewed on even "the interviewer." It is said by the reporters themselves, that Ingersoll was never known to decline an interview, and that many men who hold high positions in journalism achieved their first professional success at his hands. Precisely the same could be stated with reference to members of other profes-

sions who, as strangers, sought his wise and kindly counsel.

One of the best proofs of moral greatness and mental largeness is absence of caste and of racial, religious, and political prejudice. Ingersoll had none of these—was not prejudiced against the individual. Take the two worst forms of prejudice, —racial and religious. With reference to the latter, he said:—

"Understand me. I hate Methodism, and yet I know hundreds of splendid Methodists. I hate Catholicism, and like Catholics. I hate insanity but not the insane." (i 463)

He was as generous with the orthodox Catholic, as an individual, as he was with the dogmatic atheist. As to racial prejudice: he would have treated a negro evangelist with as much consideration as he would Professor Huxley, if not more; for the former would have excited his pity. He was graciously afflicted with the colorblindness of true democracy. Like so many other members of the negro race, the late Frederick Douglass has furnished most interesting evidence of this. On page 560 of his *Life and Times*, he says:—

"A dozen years ago, or more [1868 or earlier], on one of the frostiest and coldest nights I ever experienced, I delivered a lecture in the town of Elmwood, Illinois, twenty miles distant from Peoria. It was one of those bleak and flinty nights, when prairie winds pierce like needles, and a step on the snow sounds like a file on the steel teeth of a saw. My next appointment after Elmwood was on Monday night, and in order to reach it in time, it was necessary to go to Peoria

the night previous, so as to take an early morning train, and I could only accomplish this by leaving Elmwood after my lecture at midnight, for there was no Sunday train. So a little before the hour at which my train was expected at Elmwood, I started for the station with my friend Mr. Brown, the gentleman who had kindly entertained me during my stay. On the way I said to him, 'I am going to Peoria with something like a real dread of the place. I expect to be compelled to walk the streets of that city all night to keep from freezing.' I told him that 'the last time I was there I could obtain no shelter at any hotel and I fear I shall meet a similar exclusion to-night.' Mr. Brown was visibly affected by the statement and for some time was silent. At last, as if discovering a way out of a painful situation, he said, 'I know a man in Peoria, should the hotels be closed against you there, who would gladly open his doors to you—a man who will receive you at any hour of the night, and in any weather, and that man is Robert G. Ingersoll.' 'Why,' said I, 'it would not do to disturb a family at such a time as I shall arrive there, on a night so cold as this.' 'No matter about the hour,' he said; 'neither he nor his family would be happy if they thought you were shelterless on such a night. I know Mr. Ingersoll, and that he will be glad to welcome you at midnight or at cock-crow.' I became much interested by this description of Mr. Ingersoll. Fortunately I had no occasion for disturbing him or his family. I found quarters for the night at the best hotel in the city. In the morning I resolved to know more of this now famous and noted 'infidel.' I gave him an early call, for I was not so abundant in cash as to refuse hospitality in a strange city when on a mission of 'good will to men.' The experiment worked admirably. Mr. Ingersoll was at home, and if I have ever met a man with real living human sunshine in his face, and honest, manly kindness in his voice, I met one who possessed these qualities that morning. I received a welcome from Mr. Ingersoll and his family which would have been a cordial to the bruised heart of any proscribed and storm-beaten stranger, and one which I can never forget or fail to appreciate. Perhaps there were Christian ministers and Christian families in Peoria at that time by whom I might have been received in the same gracious manner. In charity I am bound to say there probably were such ministers and such families, but I am equally bound to say that in my former visits to this place I had failed to find them."

Besides this appreciative expression, Mr. Doug-

lass is said to have stated, that, of all the great men of his personal acquaintance, there had been only two in whose presence he could be without feeling that he was regarded as inferior to them—Abraham Lincoln and Robert G. Ingersoll.

On the day of the latter's death, a negro waiter at the Cadillac Hotel, Detroit, having indicated to one of the guests, by word and manner, that he (the waiter) was feeling "powerful bad," the following colloquy took place:—

"I've lost a good friend to-day. Oh! a very good friend," explained the waiter.

"Indeed," said the guest. "Who was it?"

"Colonel Ingersoll, sir; Colonel Ingersoll."

"Was he your friend?"

"He was, indeed, sir; he was my friend, one of the best of them, sir. He always used me as a gentleman, Colonel Ingersoll did. He never knew whether my skin was black or white."

The last sentence could be truthfully uttered by every other colored man with whom Ingersoll came in contact. Whether in private, or in the rostrum, or on the field of battle, the negro never had a truer friend.

In the bestowal of charity, Ingersoll was quite as careless of race, color, and creed as in the bestowal of friendship. His beneficence compassed all. This is so widely known, despite the modesty which he exercised, and so many incidental references to it were made in previous chapters, that, to

answer here in the affirmative the query as to whether he practised the charity which he advocated, seems all but needless. One would think that his benevolence, inseparably blended as it is with the most cherished memories of him, would live even if left wholly to tradition. Certain it is, that the declaration of *Hamlet* has proven false for once :—

" * * * there's hope a great man's memory may outlive his life half a year ; but by'r lady, he must build churches then * * * ."

Still, it may not be well to place implicit confidence in tradition.

It is peculiarly interesting, that the Great Agnostic's sentiments on the unfortunate had been perfectly expressed for him in a prayer—"the best" that he "ever read"—the prayer of *Lear* upon the heath :—

"Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
How shall your unhoused heads, your unfed sides,
Your looped and windowed raggedness, defend you
From seasons such as these? Oh, I have ta'en
Too little care of this. Take physic, pomp;
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou may'st shake the superflux to them,
And show the heavens more just."

Yet, notwithstanding his admiration for this marvelous deliverance, he himself declared :—

"The hands that help are better far
Than lips that pray."

He used to say that he did not understand how one could live in possession of great wealth where thousands were starving, any more than one could keep a pile of lumber on the beach and watch thousands drown in the sea. And he acted in perfect accord with these sentiments. A gentleman who was intimately acquainted with Ingersoll's private affairs remarked to the author, while Ingersoll was yet living: "The world will never know the extent of 'the Colonel's' benefactions. He will not permit it to be known while he lives; and after he is dead, no one will be able to believe the truth about it, even if divulged by his family."

The sufferings of the poor and wretched filled his heart with anguish. It was an unwritten law, that no one should go hungry from his door. It is morally certain, that he never turned a deaf ear to poverty. It is just as certain, that he was constantly imposed upon. Some of his friends, feeling sure of this, used to advise him to mingle more judgment with his charity. To such he replied: "The trouble with most people is, that they mingle so much 'judgment' with their charity that it is nearly all 'judgment.'" And so his responses to the countless appeals that reached him in various ways, from all sides, were practically indiscriminate. He said that he should rather be deceived a dozen times, than that one poor soul should suffer through mistaken suspicion.

Though Ingersoll gave his dollars by hundreds

and thousands, it was not the size of his individual gifts that proved most clearly his beneficent qualities: it was the number and the spirit of those gifts—the countless acts which he performed, in private, with the understanding that they were not to become generally known, and which, in fact, did become known to only a few.

As has so often been observed by his detractors, he founded no college or asylum. He was too busy with the individual. He never experienced, nor cared to experience, the haughty, egotistic satisfaction of one who sees his own name chiseled amid the cold embellishments of architecture; but a thousand times he heard the words, or saw the tears, of those who, in need, felt the warmth of his heart. To assist the ragged, hungry, and despairing wretch of the street; to make a substantial gift to some man or woman grown prematurely old with menial toil; to relieve the necessities of some poor girl, some clerk or student; to care for the mother and child that death has left with naught but tears; to sympathize with the failures,—the victims,—of nature; to uplift the fallen; to pity even the criminal and despised—to do all these, as did Ingersoll, is to demonstrate, not merely "philanthropy," but the possession of as tender and noble a heart as ever throbbed in human breast.

Even should we decline to ascribe to Ingersoll higher attributes than are ordinarily implied by "philanthropic," we should still be bound to in-

quire, in simple fairness, whether he could well have been more so. For a score of years, his annual income ranged from fifty thousand to one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. He did not dissipate nor gamble, and yet did not own a foot of earth, nor even the house in which he died; and his personal property did not exceed in value ten thousand dollars. He had often made that much in a day or two. With the income of a prince, he died in comparative poverty. What had become of his money? Such of it as had not been lavished on his loved ones had been given to others. If we apply the term "philanthropist" to one who gives a part of his possessions, expecting, in return, honor in this world, and a reward in another, what term shall we apply to him who gave all, expecting neither of these?

In this connection, both justice and accuracy require a word of comment upon the assertion, frequently made, that Ingersoll cared nothing for money. It implies, of course, that his monetary generosity was not generosity at all. Now, it is true that he did not care for money for money's sake; that he did not make a fetich of money. He did not care for a dollar, nor, appreciably, for a thousand dollars; but he cared for a million dollars —not for what it is in itself, but for the comforts and luxuries which it brings. And no one had the capacity to enjoy them more than he. In this sense, he cared a great deal for money.

In considering his ministrations to the unfortunate, it would be impossible to give due credit to his personality without mentioning a remarkable faculty to which as yet I have not alluded. I refer to his influence over the insane.

For instance, during his early legal practice, in Illinois, an old coal-miner, surnamed Thomas, was visited at his (Thomas') house by three men, now supposed to have been strikers, a strike then being in progress. The old man, fearing that they had come to take his life, fired from a window and killed one of them. In a trial for murder, Ingersoll defended Thomas, who was acquitted. But he shortly became insane—from remorse, it was said. At times he was quite rational; at others, violent. Aware of the calmative influence exerted upon him by the personality of Ingersoll, he soon came to regard the latter as his protector. And so, at the approach of a mental attack, he would leave his home, on the Kickapoo, and, accompanied by his scraggy old dog, go straight to Ingersoll's house, in Peoria. He would follow the latter to his office, and remain till Ingersoll went home; then he would sit all night on the veranda—always perfectly contented so long as he was near to Ingersoll, but wild with fear if they became separated by any considerable distance. In a few days, the mental storm having subsided, he and his faithful old dog would trudge back to the Kickapoo,—to return again in a few months, perhaps, perhaps not for a year.

Ingersoll was once riding in a train, near Worcester, Mass., he being seated alone, when a strange man who had been eyeing him intently for some time, approached and asked permission to sit with him. "You look so restful," he said to Ingersoll, by way of excuse. Presently he commenced to pour his confidences into Ingersoll's ears, stating, among other things, that he had just escaped from an asylum, to which he was sent because the doctrine of hell-fire, taught him by his mother, made him insane. Remarkable coincidence—a victim of the idea of infinite revenge appealing to its arch enemy for comfort and protection! Strange confirmation of the Great Agnostic's assertion, that one who really believes in everlasting punishment will go insane!

Believing that the mentally unbalanced, like others, are amenable to kindness, Ingersoll, as a rule, did not unnecessarily question their vagaries or delusions. On at least one occasion, however, his method was humorously different from this. He was again riding in a train, when a strange man suddenly came to his seat and asked:

"Do you know God?"

Instantly recognizing that his questioner was insane, Ingersoll replied,—with face as solemn as a tombstone: "No: I don't know God, but I know Mrs. God."

The lunatic's countenance, as he momentarily stared at Ingersoll, assumed, it is said, a look which unmistakably indicated that in its owner's opinion

he was not the only crazy man in that car! Completely nonplussed, he straightway took his seat, preserving unbroken silence as long as the two occupied the same car.

These are but a few of the many instances which might be cited to show that Ingersoll possessed—and, too, quite in addition to his tact and wit—an unusual power over the unfortunate individuals concerned. It was doubtless simply a particular manifestation of that general feeling of trust and confidence which he inspired, in greater or less degree, in all with whom he came in contact.

His treatment of those misguided persons who assumed toward him the rôle of enemy affords ample proof of his mental largeness and magnanimity. Bitterly as he was hated by some, he never hated in return. In his great heart there was no room for malice. "It is of no use to raise snakes in your bosom—you have to sleep with them," he would say. And so he never indulged in a pectoral menagerie of any kind. Of course he did not claim to love his enemies, because he knew that it was impossible for him to love them; and he believed it to be quite as impossible for others to love theirs. He did not believe in miracles, either physical or emotional; but he did believe in the "reciprocity" of Confucius. Like that great sage and moralist, his practice was:—

"For benefits return benefits; for injuries return justice, without admixture of revenge."

A series of incidents that occurred in Illinois will serve to illustrate not only his practice of this rule of ethics, but the way in which he was so often misunderstood.

A minister, during a call at Ingersoll's home, began to indulge in the usual clerical animadversions on Voltaire, for whom Ingersoll, as we have learned, entertained inordinate admiration and love. The latter asked his reverend guest whether he had read the immortal Frenchman. The minister replied, that he had read everything that Voltaire wrote. Ingersoll doubted this, but said nothing to indicate his doubt. The conversation continued for a few minutes, when he went to his library, and, returning with a book, read aloud a favorite selection. The minister expressed great admiration for it, and inquired the name of its author. In silence, Ingersoll handed his visitor the volume: it was *Voltaire!* In the breast of this Protestant clergyman of the prairies,—rendered vulnerable by pretence,—Ingersoll, in silence, had pierced as sharp a wound as Voltaire himself was wont to inflict with words in the breasts of the Catholic prelates of Europe.

The clergyman straightway took his departure, and subsequently preached a series of sermons that were both critical and abusive of the Great Agnostic. But the latter was as silent as when he handed the book to their prospective author.

A few years later, the minister made it his privi-

lege to attend (in some town not far from Peoria) a political meeting at which Ingersoll spoke. After the meeting, the minister made it his further privilege to occupy a seat in the conveyance by which the speaker returned to his hotel. Upon reaching the latter, the clergyman asked to see Ingersoll in private. His request granted, he explained that he had grown somewhat, intellectually, since the incident concerning Voltaire; that he understood Ingersoll better, and wished to be forgiven for having preached the abusive sermons. He was generously absolved from the sin.[1]

This one sample of the immense totality of evidence, that Ingersoll lived, in private, to his publicly professed ideal of the treatment of one's enemies, must here suffice. It is obviously impracticable to do more than to indicate the conduct that was characteristic of him in this regard.

The same is true concerning his practice of all the other ideals and precepts of his philosophy. Hence, the aim of this chapter has been, not a catalogue of acts, but a characterization.

If the latter has been even partially realized, it has brought us to the unmistakable and unavoidable conclusion: That Ingersoll did "practise what he preached"; that he was a perfect husband and father, a faithful, generous friend, a kind

[1] Contrary to general understanding, this incident of visitor and *Voltaire*, here correctly narrated, has absolutely no connection with Ingersoll's candidacy for the governorship of Illinois.

employer; that he was invariably courteous to strangers; that he was a true philanthropist,—loving his fellow-men regardless of race, or color, or creed,—doing his utmost for the poor and wretched, and pitying even the criminal and despised; that he was just to his enemies—in short, that he was supreme in every relation of life; and that, as we accepted Ingersoll's philosophy after considering its precepts and doctrines, so now, having considered Ingersoll's conduct, we must accept Ingersoll the philosopher—Ingersoll the man.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HIS FACULTIES OF ARTISTIC AND INTELLECTUAL EXPRESSION

HE WHO would rise to the full scope of Ingersoll's art, in its varied manifestations—oratory, poetry, prose—must be familiar with the elements of things. He must be of no school or cult—must possess that elemental depth, that aversion to the provincial, that view of the universal, which invariably marks the mind of genius. In unison with the great eternal pulse of the universe must be the rhythm of his heart and brain.

But how are we to look upon the artistic side of Ingersoll? Shall he be viewed as an orator, as a poet, or as a rhetorician? I answer: As none of these, in particular; for he was far more than any or all of them: he was an idealist,—one of the purest and sublimest that has lived. Back of every expression,—poetic, oratorical, or philosophical,—was the ideal. This he worshiped. In the realm of art, he saw with faultless eye. So absolute was his devotion to the ideal; so keen, and yet so profound, his sense of symmetry, pro-

portion, harmony, that he clothed his thoughts in the noblest garb, shrinking from the inapposite, the inelegant, as surely as the magnet repels a scrap of lead. This made his art supreme.

It is often remarked: "That man was a great sculptor," "That man was a great painter," when it should be said: "A great idealist chiseled that statue," "A great idealist painted that picture." Who can not chisel or paint? But how many who chisel or paint or write or speak do so at the command of the ideal?

Every writer and every speaker unconsciously produces a perfect likeness of his physical and mental being—of himself. It is called his style. Critics sometimes assert that the style of so-and-so is "artificial." In the ultimate sense, this is erroneous. Should a writer employ a borrowed style, it would not be his style, any more than an apple artificially attached to a twig of an orange-tree would be an orange. And no matter how successful he might be in deceiving others as to the genuineness of his style, he could never succeed in deceiving himself.

We are here led to a most fitting comparison of two natural phenomena: the tree and its fruit—the author and his style. The analogy is unmistakable. Neither literally nor figuratively do men gather grapes from thorns, nor figs from thistles. No one would have expected Daniel Webster—the Brobdingnagian frame, the leonine head with brow

overhanging cliff-like the cavernous eyes and rugged lines below—to produce a *Queen Mab*. It required the slight figure, the girlish, sympathetic face, the intense blue eyes, the keen sensibilities, the rare ethereal vision, of Shelley.

Ingersoll, too, put his personality into his lines. His style, therefore, is not susceptible to comparison—it is utterly unique! Should one of his marvelous pages be found on the sands of the Sahara, its author would be instantly recognizable.

A vast majority of our race are substantially alike. They look alike, dress alike, act alike, think alike. Since they must inevitably, if unconsciously, infuse into their literary expression a part of their very selves, how can they but write alike? Indeed, not only is the latter what we are led, by reason and analogy, to expect: it is precisely what we establish by observation. Take the output in any branch of literature—contemporary periodical verse, for example. As far as individuality is concerned, the greater part of the periodical verse of the last decade, or of the preceding, could have been written by a single person. Between the styles (if "styles" there be) of almost any two of the scores of authors actually represented, there is less difference than between the styles of the garments of any two of those authors, despite the proverbial pecuniary vicissitudes of literary fortune. Ingersoll himself described, all too faithfully, this class of artists when he said:—

"* * * Most writers suppress individuality. They wish to please the public. They flatter the stupid and pander to the prejudice of their readers. They write for the market, making books as other mechanics make shoes. They have no message, they bear no torch, they are simply the slaves of customers.

"The books they manufacture are handled by 'the trade'; they are regarded as harmless. The pulpit does not object; the young person can read the monotonous pages without a blush—or a thought.

"On the title pages of these books you will find the imprint of the great publishers; on the rest of the pages, nothing. These books might be prescribed for insomnia." (iii 260)

In striking contrast with the many writers just described stand the few who are the glory of literature not only, but of the human race,—the men and the women of genius. And, strange to say, or rather, natural to say, the former have always made, and are still making, with perhaps equal frequency, in reference to the latter, two contradictory assertions. About half of the mediocrities assert, that individuals of genius are the same as others; and this is perfectly natural, because mediocrity can scarcely be expected fully to comprehend its own limitations. A prisoner can see only the inner side of the confining wall—never the outer side nor the top. The other half of the mediocrities assert, that individuals of genius are absolutely different from others; and this, too, is perfectly natural, for the same reason. The truth is, that the genius is the same as others in everything except that in which he is a genius; or, reversely, he differs from others in that only in which he is not a mediocrity.

Without speculating as to the ultimate cause of the difference distinguishing him (the futility of so speculating, in the present state of scientific knowledge, having been pointed in Chapter I), we may yet briefly concern ourselves with the difference itself. The genius, then, has implicit confidence in himself; the mediocrity, confidence in others. The genius has learned little, and has little to learn: the mediocrity may have learned a great deal, but has a great deal to learn. The genius does not "suppress individuality": he expresses it. He does not "wish to please the public," but himself,—his ideal. He does not "flatter the stupid": he tries to arouse and enlighten them. He does not "pander to the prejudice" of his readers: he tries to destroy it. He does not "write for the market," but for posterity. He has a "message"; he bears a "torch"; he is not a "slave," but free. His books, though they may be "handled by 'the trade,'" are not always "regarded as harmless": they are often regarded as dangerous. To them, "the pulpit" does "object"; because, while "the young person" can read them "without a blush," neither the young nor the old can read them without "a thought."

So it was with Ingersoll and his works. And no one else in American literature, where the microcephalous deny him a place, has crowded more into a line. Many have occupied pages in expressing what he would have expressed in a paragraph.

He wrote as a river runs. In the work of no other writer is to be found less evidence of effort. There is nothing to suggest the literary student,—the "verbal varnisher and veneerer." Preëminently the word-wizard of his century, the whole of rhetoric was rejuvenated by his genius.

But there is a particular quality of his style, which, although not yet recognized by the general reader, demands conspicuous attention,—and, indeed, perhaps the most conspicuous attention,—in a just estimate of him as a literary artist. I refer to rhythm. For it is undoubtedly true, as an observing and distinguished critic has said, that Ingersoll, like Isocrates, was the first to perfect the prose rhythms of the language in which he sought expression. He possessed not only the imagination, but the ear, of the born poet. Believing that the poets themselves have demonstrated rhyme to be a hindrance, rather than a help, in expressing the sublimest thought and feeling; caring nothing for the greater part of that which passes as poetry; and often putting upon it the stamp of ridicule, he carried unconsciously into his lines the enchanting splendor,—the resistless charm,—of metered rhyme. It is this, more than any other single factor, which will one day compel impartial and unprejudiced critics to place him among the first, if not at the head, of the great masters of English prose.

So naturally did his thoughts find harmonious expression, that scarcely a page of his finer produc-

tions fails to afford, here and there, material for exquisite blank verse.

Thus "The Warp and Woof," only part of which (for spacial reasons) will be quoted, may be arranged so that the prevailing measure will be iambic pentameter:—

"The rise and set of sun,
The birth and death of day,
The dawns of silver and the dusks of gold,
The wonders of the rain and snow,
The shroud of winter and the many-colored robes of spring,
The lonely moon with nightly loss or gain,
The serpent lightning and the thunder's voice,
The tempest's fury and the breath of morn,
The threat of storm and promise of the bow;
Cathedral clouds with dome and spire," etc.

(*Prose-Poems and Selections*, p. 63)

And elsewhere, in iambic rhythm, rendered more conspicuous by prosodical division and capitalization, this charming picture of autumn:—

"The withered banners of the corn are still,
And gathered fields are growing strangely wan,
While death, poetic death,
With hands that color what they touch,
Weaves in the autumn wood
Its tapestries of brown and gold."

(*Prose-Poems and Selections*, p. 265)

Speaking of the part that myths have played in the evolution of religious thought, he says, in perfect iambic rhythm:—

"They thrilled the veins of Spring with tremulous desire;
Made tawny Summer's billowed breast the throne and home of love;
Filled Autumn's arms with sun-kissed grapes and gathered sheaves;
And pictured Winter as a weak old king
Who felt, like Lear upon his withered face, Cordelia's tears." (ii x)

The following rhapsodical tribute to Shelley is so strikingly like what Poe defined as "*The Rhythmical Creation of Beauty*," that, had it been written with ten syllables to the line, no more and no less, as it could have been, regardless alike of sense and rhythm, it would doubtless be called poetry :—

"The light of morn beyond the purple hills—
A palm that lifts its coronet of leaves above the desert's sands—
An isle of green in some far sea—
A spring that waits for lips of thirst—
A strain of music heard within some palace wrought of dreams—
A cloud of gold above a setting sun—
A fragrance wafted from some unseen shore." (xii 354)

Concerning Shakespeare's understanding of human nature, he expresses himself with a rhythm as wondrously beautiful as the molten undulations left by the sinking sun :—

"He knew the thrills and ecstasies of love,
The savage joys of hatred and revenge.
He heard the hiss of envy's snakes
And watched the eagles of ambition soar.
There was no hope that did not put its star above his head—
No fear he had not felt—
No joy that had not shed its sunshine on his face." (iii 21)

Again of Shakespeare :—

"He walked the ways of mighty Rome,
And saw great Cæsar with his legions in the field.
He stood with vast and motley throngs
And watched the triumphs given to victorious men,
Followed by uncrowned kings, the captured hosts, and all
the spoils of ruthless war.
He heard the shout that shook the Coliseum's roofless walls,
When from the reeling gladiator's hand the short sword fell,
While from his bosom gushed the stream of wasted life." (iii 71)

It will be observed, that, excepting a single line in the last, both of these Shakespearean quotations, like the one on Shelley, could be arranged in perfectly regular blank verse, with five iambic feet (ten syllables) to the line. It will also be observed, that, should they be so arranged, their sense would be marred, and they would lose insouciance and rhythmic beauty. What would be left? And yet, had they been originally written thus, by some professional poet schooled to sacrifice substance to mere traditional literary form, they would have been classed as poetry. Indeed, that this is precisely what would have occurred, even had they possessed less of poetic quality than they do, there is ample evidence. As introductory of a fragment of it, I quote :—

"The red man came—the roaming hunter tribes, warlike and fierce, and the mound-builders vanished from the earth. The solitude of centuries untold has settled where they dwelt. The prairie wolf hunts in their meadows, and his fresh-dug den yawns by my path. The gopher mines the ground where stood their swarming cities."

Surely the average reader, chancing upon this

passage, would not suspect that he was being enriched beyond the potencies of good prose: and yet, no less a judge of literature than William Cullen Bryant evidently regarded it as poetry; for he wrote and published it as such, in blank verse of just ten syllables, under the title *The Prairies*, as follows:—

> "The red man came—
> The roaming hunter tribes, warlike and fierce,
> And the mound-builders vanished from the earth.
> The solitude of centuries untold
> Has settled where they dwelt. The prairie wolf
> Hunts in their meadows, and his fresh-dug den
> Yawns by my path. The gopher mines the ground
> Where stood their swarming cities."

But let it be understood, that this passage is not quoted with the object of asserting that it is not poetry, nor with the purposive implication that the scores of productions in like form which might be quoted from other sources are not poetry. Rather is it quoted with the object of rendering the reader receptive to a question which I have had in mind for many years, and which I now ask, in simple justice: If that which, when transformed into prose, is indistinguishable from it may be retransformed into verse and legitimately called poetry, what term shall be applied to that which, although originally written as prose, contains imaginative, emotional, rhythmic, and tonal qualities unmistakably placing it above and beyond good prose?

That is to ask, if the quotation from Bryant is poetry, what are the quotations from Ingersoll? If Bryant and others of his school were poets, what was Ingersoll? Let us be candid; let us be fair; let us be sensible.

Form is one thing; substance, or quality, quite another. Form is not an alembic transmuting the baser mental metals into gold. It does not create —it is created. It cannot change prose to poetry, nor poetry to prose. Volumes of prose have been written as poetry; volumes of poetry, as prose.

The truth is, that, of all the elements of recognized poetic form, only one is absolutely indispensable to poetry—rhythm. There may be very great poetry without rhyme, and without perfect meter; but poetry without rhythm is not poetry: it is mere verse. It is a heart that does not beat—a stream without cataracts—a willow that does not wave—a bird without wings—a star that does not shine.

This indispensable element of poetry,—this indefinable something that haunts with enchanting spell the golden temple of enraptured song,—is apparent in all of Ingersoll's finer work. Of course, it is rendered more so by the formal treatment which I have applied to particular selections; but, unlike that of a considerable portion of the professional poet's blank verse, it cannot be obscured by the prose form, in which Ingersoll usually cast his printed thoughts. Of this, there is

no stronger nor more pleasing evidence than the following fragment of one of his controversial papers :—

> "Life is a shadowy, strange, and winding road on which we travel for a little way—a few short steps—just from the cradle, with its lullaby of love, to the low and quiet wayside inn, where all at last must sleep, and where the only salutation is—Good night." (vi 62)

In exercising the art of expression, Ingersoll kept to himself all that was back of the scene. He made no explanation—offered no excuse. His presence was his prelude ; his pen was his preface. He knew that a glance behind the canvas mars the effect of the greatest painting. Very few writers, and still fewer orators, appear to recognize this vital esthetic truth. Hence most of them, by way of introduction, usually exhibit all of the defects that an imperfect mastery can reveal—the crude ideas and rejected fragments—the very interior of their mental workshops. It is like a glimpse of the kitchen from the banquet board.

What would the tender and enthralling lines to "Chloris" be worth were they prefaced by Burns to imply, that, before writing them, he had carefully and conscientiously compared her with the other girls ? Think of it !

Most writers are afflicted with a sort of verbose diathesis. Having almost no imagination, they credit the reader with a like amount. They anticipate the very motions of his brain—tell every-

thing. Their lines are prison-bars between which fettered fancy catches only now and then a glimpse of field and sky. With such a style, Ingersoll had no patience. He despised detail, the mathematical, the provincial. In short, he was an idealist; and his style, like the rainbow, arched in iridescent wonder the intellectual sky. He knew that one mind can get from another no more than it is "capable of receiving," and that, between the words, there should always be room for the reader or hearer to use the brush and chisel. He knew that every mind, in spite of others,—in spite of itself,—takes its own peculiar view. He realized that the greatest work of art is, at most, only a sort of mental arbor where cling and run the vines of fancy, springing from the brain of whomsoever reads or sees. Most of these vines would be dwarfed and flowerless, and not last half the season through; some might live, but would not thrive; others still, with exuberance interwoven, would tender to mating songsters the hospitality of countless leafy bowers, fling to summer dawns blossoms fit for *Juliet's* breast, while beneath the mellowing skies would hang, in clustered spheres and purple, the smiles and tears of April days, the amorous kisses of unnumbered suns.

There is a particular circumstance which those who would form a just estimate of Ingersoll's expressional faculties should keep constantly in mind: he was, first of all, an orator. By dint of

the orator's power and prestige did he lay claim upon contemporaries; and under the orator's almost fateful disadvantages must he lay claim upon posterity. The present has memories; the future will have type and tradition. The critic, the student, even the admirer, in the years to be will know and feel only so much of the expressional power of this great personality as can be conveyed by the illusive and inadequate medium of the insensate page. Gone,—fading in the mist of memory,—the noble form; silent,—echoing only in the hearts of a lessening few,—the voice that soothed and silvered common speech, and glorified the unremembering air; vanished the enthralling presence—a presence that held in magic spell the spirit of the springtime dawn,—the calm of fulfilled noon,—the peacefulness of eventide,—the tranquillity of midnight upon the star-lit plain.

So in Ingersoll the orator were blended, in matchless harmony, nature's rarest and noblest gifts. The circumstances under which the latter first became manifest,—under which he discovered himself,—are as interesting as they were anomalous.

Robert Ingersoll was in his late teens when a presumably orthodox gentleman who had been selected to speak at a Sunday-school picnic, on the Fourth of July, near a small town in Illinois, was prevented by illness, at the veritable "eleventh hour," from keeping his engagement. Thereupon the good people who were charged with seeing that

the programme was carried out in its original completeness, and who had heard something of young Ingersoll's oratorical inclinations, invited him to take the place of the delinquent one.

The youthful substitute chose as his theme the patriots and heroes of the Revolution. Familiar, of course, with the great and noble services which Thomas Paine had rendered, not only to America, but to the whole world, before, during, and after that struggle, and resenting, with deepest indignation, the base ingratitude which had been his lot simply and solely because of his subsequent deistical and antichristian writings, Ingersoll had previously made a resolution never to deliver a speech without mentioning the name of the "Author-Hero." The probability that those whom he was about to address were somewhat deficient in reliable data concerning the author of *Common Sense*, *The Crisis*, *The Rights of Man*, etc. doubtless served to confirm, in Ingersoll's judgment, the wisdom of the resolution just mentioned. Anyway, the memory of Thomas Paine received at that Sunday-school picnic its rightful meed. This, of course, was met with resentment—resentment which the youthful speaker read unmistakably in the faces and voices of his orthodox elders. But in the same faces and voices, he read something else—evidence of kindled emotion; for, many times during his speech,—made without preparation,—his hearers were moved alternately to laughter and tears. In that laughter and

those tears,—in that April of his genius,—Robert Ingersoll saw the many-colored bow of promise. For the first time, he realized that he held the magic key which, even through the cankerous rust of prejudice, could reach and unlock the secrets of the soul.

Of the "rarest and noblest gifts," visible and invisible, which 'nature blended with matchless harmony in Ingersoll the orator,' I would here mention eyes, features, and physique; for these were by no means the least of the many factors which combined to constitute in him "that wonderful thing called presence."

His eyes, then, were light-blue, changing, with varying moods, to gray,—changing markedly; and his face was "the face that mirrored thoughts." Among the orators of the world, from Pericles to the present, there is no face like the face of Ingersoll. As you gaze upon it, you feel that nature has reached the summit—that she can rise no higher, can do no more—that she, at last, has done what she set out to do. This face is *human!*—you feel that a great brain is in partnership with a great heart, and that the heart is senior partner. The lines of the former seem everywhere just subdued by the lines of the latter—the lines of intellect to blend easily, gladly, with the lines of art. The forehead, the eyes, the nose, of the thinker are also those of the artist and philanthropist; the mouth and chin of the intellectual gladiator are

also the mouth and chin of the poet,—almost of the mother. As you gaze upon this face, you feel that mercy, at last, has found expression—every unfortunate, a friend; that the moans of every martyr,—the longings of every exile,—the agonies of every victim of dungeon, rack, and chain,—the burdens of every slave,—the despair and wretchedness of every outcast,—the cries of every unmothered babe,—the sobs and yearnings of every abused or hungry child,—were heard and felt by the unknown sculptor who traced the lines;—that those lines express the rapturous realization of an eon-wished, but hitherto unpictured and unembodied, ideal. And you feel that, after all, man's melancholy martyrdom was not in vain; that the race has possibilities; that its future is radiant with hope. This face has the contour, the symmetry, the poise and balance, the confidence, the integrity, the frankness, the open honesty—the naturalness—of nature. In it are the joy of June and the serenity of September. And yet there is earnestness, determination, unmistakable. In fact, you look upon this face, and you feel that, were it just a trifle less serious, you should smile. You look a moment longer, and—you smile! and are satisfied.

In height Ingersoll was six feet, minus half an inch; and, in his prime, he weighed from two hundred to two hundred and twenty pounds. This brief statement, in conjunction with the preceding text

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(Æt. 44)

From a photograph by Bradley and Rulopson, San Francisco.

and illustrations, might, perhaps, suffice as a description of his physical appearance, were it not for the remarkable fact (repeatedly noted by intimate friends), that, when he stepped upon the platform before an audience, he seemed suddenly to become a giant in stature,—far ampler and taller than he actually was—seemed to rise on the spirit of the occasion, to the supreme command of everything in sight! The greater the occasion and the audience, the greater he seemed to become, and the higher he seemed to rise. He was peculiarly, preëminently, "the born orator"—born anew with every inspiration. Of incomparable physique,—the broad and massive shoulders supporting a perfectly molded head—with the formidableness of an antique warrior, and yet the gentle mien of a child—his was a presence to command the attention of the Olympian gods. The admirer of the majestic, the heroic, the classic in poise and bearing,—of the Grecian ideal in breathing flesh,—who never sat with an audience as Robert G. Ingersoll strode upon the stage and stood "foursquare to all the winds that blew," has missed such an unforgettable impression as will not again be the proud and happy fortune of mankind.

Oratory is the noblest stream that flows from the hidden spring of the ideal to the illimitable ocean of expression. Ingersoll was acquainted by nature with the course of that stream—knew its every inch, from where it, dallying, sparkles like a silver

thread among the rocks and hills of thought, to where its mighty current forces back the tides of error in the broad estuary of persuasion.

Of course, as already mentioned, oratory cannot be put upon paper. It cannot even be separated from the times and the scenes that produce it, nor from the effects that it in turn produces. As dead protoplasm is no longer protoplasm, so a printed oration is not an oration. The unprecedented occasion—the opportunity previously sought in vain, but now within the orator's grasp; the vast assemblage waiting only for the magic voice that shall set vibrating in unison with each other, and with those of the orator, the secret chords of sympathy and emotion; the flashing eye, the poise, the gesture, and the thrilling pause—language too eloquent for utterance—these are as much a part of the oration as are its words.

But while the latter alone are comparatively valueless in judging the orator as such, they do enable us to judge him as verbal artist and philosopher.

To attempt a final selection from the gems that, for forty years, fell from the golden lips of Ingersoll, seems well nigh hopeless. To choose from most other geniuses, would be an easy task. Their average product contains enough of the commonplace to distinguish passages that are really grand. But Ingersoll left nothing commonplace. Great lines,—thoughts that touch the universal,—poems

of subtle shade,—are found on almost every page. Many sentences are music, as sweet as the Orphean lyre, and will hold their power to charm as long as genius knows its kith and kin. There was no thought, fancy, sentiment, emotion, or passion in the expression of which he was not supreme. He was the Phidias of verbal sculpture —the Michaelangelo of words. From the gallery of his mind, he selected symbols, figures, pictures, as easily,—as naturally,—as the sea tosses upon the sand a nameless gem.

So the question as to which is Ingersoll's oratorical masterpiece is preëminently,—almost distinctively,—one that does not permit of a confident answer. Yet, ask the average person to name that masterpiece, and he will mention the "Plumed Knight Speech" or *A Tribute to Ebon C. Ingersoll* or, possibly, *A Vision of War*. Why I do not know. Probably it is because he has read one of them. For, though perfect of their kind, none of them, I judge, is better entitled to distinction than are several other productions of our orator.

Take the "Soliloquy" at the grave of Napoleon —only a few sentences, to be sure—a few touches of the brush; and yet it is a complete and perfect picture of that marvelous life, from the insatiable ambition which would grasp and hold the world, to the Stygian midnight of despair and gloom which settled at St. Helena. There, "gazing out upon the sad and solemn sea"—"the only woman that ever

loved him pushed from his heart by the cold hand of ambition"—stands the great Napoleon. And beside the "poor peasant," in "wooden shoes," but surrounded by loving wife and happy children, how small and wretched!

Then there is "The Cemetery"—"that vast cemetery called the past," wherein are "most of the religions of men," and "nearly all their gods," from India's mystic shrines to the divine fires of our Aztecs—a view of comparative mythology and religion which is universal in its scope, and which is expressed with the charm of consummate art.

And the Shakespearean lecture—a vine of words that twines with subtle delicacy and grace around the mighty oak of Shakespeare's brain. I have often thought that there are two productions which should be in the hands of every student of English, —Spencer's *Philosophy of Style* and Ingersoll's lecture on Shakespeare: the first, to show *why* certain words and expressions are used in preference to others; the last, *how* they are used. This lecture contains, in my judgment, the noblest metaphor in our language:—

"Shakespeare was an intellectual ocean, whose waves touched all the shores of thought; within which were all the tides and waves of destiny and will; over which swept all the storms of fate, ambition and revenge; upon which fell the gloom and darkness of despair and death and all the sunlight of content and love, and within which was the inverted sky lit with the eternal stars—an intellectual ocean—towards which all rivers ran, and from which now the isles and continents of thought receive their dew and rain." (iii 73)

Many other selections, taken here and there, are hardly less notable. How many have read the following? and yet what physiologist, psychologist, poet, or philosopher has left a truer description of the human brain?—

"The dark continent of motive and desire has never been explored. In the brain, that wondrous world with one inhabitant, there are recesses dim and dark, treacherous sands and dangerous shores, where seeming sirens tempt and fade, streams that rise in unknown lands from hidden springs, strange seas with ebb and flow of tides, resistless billows urged by storms of flame, profound and awful depths hidden hy mist of dreams, obscure and phantom realms where vague and fearful things are half revealed, jungles where passion's tigers crouch, and skies of cloud and blue where fancies fly with painted wings that dazzle and mislead; and the poor sovereign of this pictured world is led by old desires and ancient hates, and stained by crimes of many vanished years, and pushed by hands that long ago were dust, until he feels like some bewildered slave that Mockery has throned and crowned." (*Prose-Poems and Selections*, p. 348)

Could the student of human nature—could any one who has climbed unhelped, or in spite of opposition, the ladder of success—possibly fail to catch the golden thread that runs through this iambic epigram?—

"Obstruction is but virtue's foil. From thwarted light leaps color's flame. The stream impeded has a song." (xii 423)

Think of the spirit of liberty that breathes through this sentence:—

"Let us go the broad way where science goes—through the open fields, past the daisied slopes, where sunlight, lingering, seems to sleep and dream."

His ability to find in the words of his very adversaries the weapons of attack,—to capture the enemy's ordnance and use it against its owner,—is well shown in describing "The Infidel":—

"He knew that all the pomp and glitter had been purchased with Liberty—that priceless jewel of the soul. In looking at the cathedral he remembered the dungeon. The music of the organ was not loud enough to drown the clank of fetters. He could not forget that the taper had lighted the fagot. He knew that the cross adorned the hilt of the sword, and so where others worshiped, he wept." (*Prose-Poems and Selections*, p. 96)

What other orator, standing at the grave of a friend, has uttered such praise as the following?—hyperbole so perfect that it actually does not seem an exageration!—

"Her heart was open as the gates of day. She shed kindness as the sun sheds light. If all her deeds were flowers, the air would be faint with perfume. If all her charities could change to melodies, a symphony would fill the sky." (xii 454)

And could human speech be more tenderly pathetic than in the lines in behalf of the aged actors whom death has claimed?—

"And then the silence falls on darkness.

"Some loving hands should close their eyes; some loving lips should leave upon their pallid brows a kiss; some friends should lay the breathless forms away, and on the graves drop blossoms jeweled with the tears of love." (xii 204)

It required three of the Rhodian artists to chisel the Laocoon group; but, in the *Decoration Day*

Oration of 1882, Ingersoll alone chiseled an allegorical group, which, in perfection at least, is its companion-piece:—

"Pity pointed to the scarred and bleeding backs of slaves; Mercy heard the sobs of mothers reft of babes, and Justice held aloft the scales, in which one drop of blood shed by a master's lash, outweighed a Nation's gold." (ix 428)

Having included the preceding, it would be very hard to omit the closing sentences of *A Vision of War*:—

"These heroes are dead. They died for liberty—they died for us. They are at rest. They sleep in the land they made free, under the flag they rendered stainless, under the solemn pines, the sad hemlocks, the tearful willows, and the embracing vines. They sleep beneath the shadows of the clouds, careless alike of sunshine or of storm, each in the windowless palace of Rest. Earth may run red with other wars —they are at peace. In the midst of battle, in the roar of conflict, they found the serenity of death. I have one sentiment for soldiers living and dead: Cheers for the living; tears for the dead." (*Prose-Poems and Selections*, p. 31)

What majesty! What harmony! What soulful perfection!—"under the solemn pines, the sad hemlocks, the tearful willows, and the embracing vines"; and "in the windowless palace of Rest." One must indeed be faintly impressible to beauty, who should hope to do justice to the author of such words as these.

Were he not necessarily aware of the sad depth to which the noxious roots of religious prejudice penetrate the mental soil of mediocrity, the justly

appreciative reader of the selections here quoted or mentioned would, despairing, wonder at the comparatively meager praise elsewhere bestowed upon their author. And with a reviewer who should utterly ignore the source of so many matchless thoughts, such reader could have but little patience. Suppose that the spirit of an absolutely unprejudiced literary critic, visiting this earth from another sphere, should find in some "Library of the World's Best Literature" liberal selections from America's recognized literati, with no mention of *Life*, *A Vision of War*, *Shakespeare*, or any of the "tributes." What, in the reader's judgment, would be that angel's opinion of literary editors? Yet this is precisely what would be found. There are in our libraries to-day compilations containing no reference to Ingersoll, but including productions of scores of writers who are all but commonplace, and whose combined efforts could never have resulted in even one of his masterpieces.

He shared with poets and philosophers the ability to express, with appositeness, lucidity, and beauty, the utmost in a line. He was gifted to an extraordinary degree with the phrasal and the epigrammatic faculties. Definitions, descriptions, comparisons, illustrations, generalizations, fell from his lips as fall the ripened fruits from autumn's laden boughs.

Thus he referred to the bygone centuries as—

"The withered leaves of time that strew the desert of the past."

In the aurora borealis, he beheld—

"the morning of the North when the glittering lances pierce the shield of night."

He was—

"touched and saddened by autumn, the grace and poetry of death."

Where others saw merely the snowflakes blown singly or in flurries, he could see—

"the infantry of the snows and the cavalry of the wild blast."

Than this it would be difficult to find in English a more strikingly suggestive figure.

With a delicacy rivaling Shelley's reference to the lids of the sleeping Ianthe, he described the breast of woman as—

"life's drifted font, blue-veined and fair, where perfect peace finds perfect form."

Condemning alike the practices of the "insane ascetic" and the "fool of pleasure," he defined temperance as—

"the golden path along the strip of verdure that lies between the deserts of extremes."

The secret of his countless tributes to manhood, heroism, and genius is revealed in this line:—

"Gratitude is the fairest flower that sheds its perfume in the heart."

There was in Ingersoll the marvelous extravagance of Hugo—of Shakespeare. Referring to the hopefulness of a beautiful but helpless girl—a paralytic—whom he had visited, he said that—

"her brave and cheerful spirit shone over the wreck and ruin of her body *like morning on the desert.*" [1]

While the selections thus far quoted,—particularly in the present chapter,—are extraordinarily rich in epigrammatic quality, they are nevertheless inadequate in doing full justice to Ingersoll's genius in the latter regard.

Our philosopher was not one of those individuals who sit down deliberately to write epigrams. Had he been such, he doubtless would not now be creditable with a greater number of really noteworthy sayings than any other American. Like Burns's poems, Ingersoll's epigrams wrote themselves.

In the one that follows, we are reminded, by the way, of the "ploughman poet's" partiality for common sense and real genius, in contradistinction to mere book-learning and acquired talent :—

"For the most part, colleges are places where pebbles are polished and diamonds are dimmed."

In our next selection, we find cause to wonder at Ingersoll's intimate knowledge of things in which he never indulged :—

[1] The italics are mine.

"A brazen falsehood and a timid truth are the parents of compromise."

And—

"Apology is the prelude to retreat."

In illustration of the truth that great cares and sorrows are rare with most of us,—that trivialities make up the bulk of life's burdens,—he said:—

"The traveler is bothered more with dust than mountains."

He observed that—

"The road is short to anything we fear,"

That—

"Joy lives in the house beyond the one we reach,"

And that—

"Hope is the only bee that makes honey without flowers."

Ingersoll uttered in the fewest, shortest words the profoundest philosophic truths,—the wisest ethical precepts.

Than the following sixteen syllables what pompous array of sentences and paragraphs could more truly express the conclusion of every candid man who has really thought?—

"The golden bridge of life from gloom emerges and on shadow rests."

He was the philosopher, not only of moral, but

of mental honesty,—of perfect intellectual veracity; and he observed that—

"Cunning plates fraud with the gold of honesty, and veneers vice with virtue."

But that, nevertheless—

"There is nothing shrewder in this world than intelligent honesty. Perfect candor is sword and shield."

And he declared that—

"Nobility is a question of character, not of birth.
"Honor cannot be received as alms—it must be earned.
"It is the brow that makes the wreath of glory green."

He was the philosopher of right:—

"Every man in the right is my brother."

Although painfully aware that "innocence is not a perfect shield" against the aggressiveness of evil, he still asserted that—

"The gem of the brain is the innocence of the soul."

He was the philosopher of human love—a believer in its protecting and redeeming powers:—

"Vice lives either before Love is born, or after Love is dead."

In the following line, conscience comes to solace the victim of unmerited neglect:—

"It is better to deserve without receiving than to receive without deserving."

He was the philosopher of freedom :—

"In the realm of Freedom, waste is husbandry. He who puts chains upon the body of another shackles his own soul."

He was the philosopher of sympathy. He believed that no character could be so lofty that it would not be elevated by pitying even the very lowest :—

"We rise by raising others—and he who stoops above the fallen, stands erect."

To those who would seek life's goal solely in the heights of fame, he said :—

"Happiness dwells in the valleys with the shadows."

He condenses the conclusions of modern physical science into these nine words :—

"A grain of sand can defy all the gods."

In the following line our language is enriched with a new definition :—

"Wisdom is the science of happiness."

To the morally short-sighted, he utters this warning :—

"He loads the dice against himself, who scores a point against the right."

Is there in progressive literature a more substantial line than the following?—

"Fear is the dungeon of the mind."

He declares that—

"Intellectual freedom is only the right to be honest."

This is one of the subtlest and profoundest truths. A person who has not the right to express his honest thoughts has not the right to be honest.

But in none of the preceding epigrams, perhaps, is there stronger proof of profound and subtle intellect than in the following fragment of an argument for the doctrine of necessity :—

"To the extent that we have wants, we are not free. To the extent that we do not have wants, we do not act."

And yet it has been said that the author of these lines was not a thinker!

It is barely necessary to state, that, making due allowance, in many cases, for unavoidable incompleteness, the selections which have been included in this chapter, and in this work as a whole, are, in my judgment, fairly representative of the artistic and intellectual Ingersoll. Should they not seem fully to justify my estimate of him, I could only wish that they might at least awaken sufficient interest to prompt their unbiased comparison with an equal number of selections, of kindred nature, from some reformer, lawyer, patriot, philosopher, orator, and poet whose title to enduring fame is universally recognized.

CHAPTER XIX.

UNIVERSAL REGRET AT HIS DEATH—A SUMMARY OF HIS LIFE-WORK IN (1) POLITICS, (2) THE LAW, (3) THE FIELD OF RATIONALISM—HIS INFLUENCE ON RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

THE DEATH of Robert G. Ingersoll, on July 21, 1899, was one of the most widely noted events of that year in the civilized world. It was also one of the most widely and profoundly regretted,—the most deeply deplored. Everywhere, the wisest knew (and the noblest felt) that the cause of humanity had met its greatest loss. To many thousands who realized the intellectual amplitude, the moral heroism and grandeur, the boundless generosity and sympathy, the tenderness and affection, of this incomparable man, his passing was as an intimate and bitter bereavement.

Ingersoll was doubtless known, personally and otherwise, to more people than any other American who had not sat in the presidential chair; and, notwithstanding either the number or the wishes

of his critics, his death probably brought genuine grief to more hearts than has that of any other individual in our history. Twice before, "a Nation bowed and wept"; this time, a people.

No sooner was the world apprised of its loss, than wires and cables were freighted with words that indicated, as unmistakably as volumes could have done, the place which he who had so unexpectedly passed the somber portals had occupied in the esteem and love of mankind. Hundreds of messages reached "Walston," many from humble individuals, many from distinguished personages in America and in Europe; while from like sources came thousands of letters. Of course, these communications differed widely in wording; but their common burden seemed to be: "The greatest and noblest of his kind has fallen, and we mourn."

The attention of the daily press was universal, the papers of the United States, Canada, Mexico, Europe, and even of Africa, publishing accounts of his death, biographical sketches, anecdotes, and extracts from his works. These accounts, sketches, and so forth varied in length, from a quarter of a column or so, to a full page or more, of the principal dailies. Countless editorials appeared, some of them several columns long. Sermons and briefer clerical comments were quite innumerable; and there were many magazine reviews. Distinctively eulogistic offerings to newspapers and periodicals were impressively numerous. It is

especially notable that very many of these tributes took the form of verse. One such was written by a native of South India. Memorial meetings were held in many places in the United States, north and south, east and west, and in Canada and England. Societies were formed in his name, days set apart to his memory. Subscriptions for the erection of monuments were started in several places. It is particularly significant that the citizens of Peoria opened such a subscription only two days after his death.

In their public invitation to subscribers, they stated, in part, through the instrumentality of the Ingersoll Monument Association :—

"The late Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll was a conspicuous figure in the history of the present century. Of heroic character, indomitable perseverance, and fearlessness, born of what he believed to be the right, he was at once the gentlest, most affectionate, lovable, and the strongest character of his day."

The monument association just mentioned was formed at the memorial meeting which was held in the Tabernacle, on July 23, 1899, and which, in its manifestations of esteem, admiration, and love, was impressive beyond description. Numerously attended,—by Freethinkers and Christians alike,—the leading citizens of Peoria,—it is impossible to do more than to note, in passing, the scores of individual tributes,—many of which, from hearts overfull, were uttered in broken words. But the final resolutions (although partially quoted, in a

particular connection, in Chapter IV) are presented in full :—

"*Whereas*, in the order of nature—that nature which moves with unerring certainty in obedience to fixed laws—Robert G. Ingersoll has gone to that repose which we call death,

"*Resolved*, That we, his old friends and fellow-citizens, who have shared his friendship in the past, hereby manifest the respect due his memory. At a time when everything impelled him to conceal his opinions or to withhold their expression, when the highest honors of the state were his if he would but avoid the discussion of the questions that relate to futurity, he avowed his belief ; he did not bow his knee to superstition nor countenance a creed from which his intellect dissented.

"Casting aside all the things for which men most sigh—political honor, the power to direct the fortunes of the state, riches and emoluments, the association of the worldly and the well-to-do—he stood forth and expressed his honest doubts, and he welcomed the ostracism that came with it, as a crown of glory, no less than did the martyrs of old.

"Even this self-sacrifice has been accounted shame to him, saying that he was urged thereto by a desire for financial gain, when at the time he made his stand there was before him only the prospect of loss and the scorn of the public. We, therefore, who know what a struggle it was to cut loose from his old associations, and what it meant to him at that time, rejoice in his triumph and in the plaudits that came to him from thus boldly avowing his opinions, and we desire to record the fact that we feel that he was greater than a saint, greater than a mere hero—he was a thoroughly honest man.

"He was a believer, not in the narrow creed of a past barbarous age, but a true believer in all that men ought to hold sacred, the sanctity of the home, the purity of friendship, and the honesty of the individual. He was not afraid to advocate the fact that eternal truth was eternal justice; he was not afraid of the truth, nor to avow that he owed allegiance to it first of all, and he was willing to suffer shame and condemnation for its sake.

"The laws of the universe were his bible ; to do good, his religion, and he was true to his creed. We therefore commend his life, for he was the apostle of the fireside, the evangel of justice and love and charity and happiness.

"We who knew him when he first began his struggle, his old neighbors and friends, rejoice at the testimony he has left us, and we commend his life and efforts as worthy of emulation.

"*Resolved*, That we extend our heartfelt sympathy to his family in their great loss, and that a copy of these resolutions be forwarded to them."

Even more significant, because coming from a source of still more intimate knowledge, are the resolutions that were adopted at a regimental meeting of the surviving members of the Eleventh Illinois Cavalry Volunteers, in Peoria, on July 26th:—

"Robert G. Ingersoll is dead. The brave soldier, the unswerving patriot, the true friend, and the distinguished colonel of that old regiment of which we have the honor to be a remnant, sleeps his last sleep.

"No word of ours, though written in flame, no chaplet that our hands can weave, no testimony that our personal knowledge can bring, will add anything to his fame, which the American public will not now freely accord.

"The world honors him as the prince of orators in his generation, as its emancipator from manacles and dogmas; philosophy, for his aid in beating back the ghosts of superstition; and we, in addition to these, for our personal knowledge of him, as a man, a soldier, and a friend.

"We knew him as the general public did not. We knew him in the military camp, where he reigned an uncrowned king, ruling with that bright scepter of human benevolence which death alone could wrest from his hand.

"We had the honor to obey, as we could, his calm but resolute commands at Shiloh, at Corinth, and at Lexington, knowing as we did, that he would never command a man to go where he would not dare to lead the way.

"Hence we recognize only a small circle around his recent heaven and home, who could know more of his manliness and worth than we do. And to such we say: Look up, if you can, through natural

tears; try to be as brave as he was, and try to remember—in the midst of a grief which his greatest wish for life would have been to help you to bear—that he had no fear of death nor of anything beyond.

"And we, the survivors, comrades of the Eleventh Illinois Cavalry, extend to his widow and children our condolence in this hour of their sad bereavement."

At a memorial meeting of Webb Command, Union Veterans' Union, held in Peoria, on August 11th, it was similarly resolved, among other things, that "this nation has lost one of its brightest ornaments, and humanity one of its best, bravest, and truest friends."

More numerously attended than any of the meetings thus far mentioned, and quite as impressive in every other respect, was the one held in Studebaker Hall, Chicago, on August 6th, under the joint auspices of the Eleventh Illinois Cavalry Veterans' Association and the Ingersoll Memorial Association, then just organized in that city. Thousands were present, many having journeyed from distant points in the United States and Canada. The meeting was presided over by Mr. Thomas Cratty, of Peoria; Mr. Darrow (the eminent lawyer and author), Colonel Davidson, and Colonel Carr, whose works were quoted in Chapters III and VIII, being among the speakers. Perhaps a majority of the latter not only, but of the audience as well, were adherents to the Christian religion. The services occupied about four hours.

Of this remarkable demonstration, little further

can be stated than that every word with which the mortal living are wont to voice their esteem, their admiration, their love and adoration, for the immortal dead was utilized in its most meaning eloquence. Earnestly, tenderly, reverently was the opinion avowed, by every speaker, Christian and Freethought alike, that the fame of Ingersoll was secure. Some went far beyond this, Mr. Cratty declaring, in substance, that 'upon the likeness of Ingersoll, future generations would gaze with more tenderness and joy than upon that of any other man, living or dead.' Another speaker expressed the belief that 'temples will be built to Ingersoll, and his image be worshiped, when all gods and religions now known on earth shall have been forgotten.' "He uttered more sublime words," said Mr. C. A. Wendle, of Ottawa, "than any other man who ever lived." Mr. Darrow touched the keynote of his address in the following :—

"Robert G. Ingersoll was a great man, a wonderful intellect, a great soul of matchless courage, one of the great men of the earth—and yet we have no right to bow down to his memory simply because he was great. * * * Great orators, great soldiers, great lawyers, often use their gifts for a most unholy cause. * * * We meet to pay a tribute of love and respect to Robert G. Ingersoll * * * because he used his matchless power for the good of man."

The same eloquent testimony, with much other which was far more eulogistic, but which cannot be presented here, was borne by Colonel Carr :—

"He was the boldest, most aggressive, courageous, virile, and the

kindliest and gentlest and most considerate and loving man I ever knew. His was a nature that yielded to no obstacles, that could not be moved nor turned aside by the allurements of place or position, the menaces of power, the favors of the opulent, or the enticing influences of public opinion. Entering upon his career in an age of obsequiousness and time-serving, when the values of political and religious views were estimated by what they would bring from the ruling party and from the church, in offices and emoluments and benefices, he assailed the giant evils of the times with the strength and power of Hercules and ground them to dust under his trip-hammer blows. Throughout his whole active life, there has been no greater and more potential influence than the personality of this sublime character in breaking the shackles of the slave, and in freeing men and women and children from the bonds of ignorance and superstition."

How truly the several speakers whom I have quoted reflected the consensus of their auditors, may be judged by the following extracts from the resolutions that those auditors adopted :—

"*Resolved*, That in the consideration of the place to be worthily and properly accredited to him in the estimation of his countrymen for his discharge of the duties and responsibilities of the citizen, the soldier, and the statesman, his comrades and friends in Illinois feel that the state which gave to the nation a Lincoln and a Grant has contributed to enrich the records of American citizenship in the life, person, and character of Robert G. Ingersoll. In him broad-minded toleration was tempered with even-handed justice, and a gracious beneficence was qualified by a keen sense of private responsibility and public duty. His companions and friends can share with his family the substantial satisfaction of knowing that no impure motives or unworthy aims ever sullied the purity of his private life or marred the unblemished integrity of his personal character.

"*Resolved*, That in his career as a soldier and commanding officer in the Union army the example of Robert G. Ingersoll is worthy of emulation by the American citizen at any time or in any emergency when the interests of his country may demand his services. We recall with pride and affection his prompt and earnest devotion to the cause of the Union in the hour of its greatest peril.

"*Resolved*, That as a statesman and publicist Robert G. Ingersoll achieved a high and enduring place in the estimation of all who stand for good citizenship, social and civic morality, and a high standard of private and public life.

"A master spirit in a masterful and prolific age, the gentle life and mighty work of Robert G. Ingersoll have reflected luster upon American institutions, and have won for him undying fame in the hearts of those who are devoted to the achievement for their countrymen of the greatest good for the greatest number.

On the same date as that of the preceding resolutions, thousands of the citizens of Denver met, in the Broadway Theater there, in another very notable manifestation. To pay a debt of gratitude and love to "the champion of freedom, the most earnest and eloquent defender of the rights of man, woman, and child, the most fearless opponent of superstition, and the advocate of the oppressed against the oppressor," was, in the language of the memorial minutes, the object of the meeting. The latter was most impressive,—impressive in the same respects as the meetings in Peoria and Chicago. Therefore, it would be but repetition to do more than to indicate the substance and spirit of the principal address.

In this, Governor Thomas declared that the character of Ingersoll "was as nearly perfect as it is possible for the character of mortal man to be"; that 'none sweeter or nobler had ever blessed the world'; that 'the example of his life was of more value to posterity than all the sermons that were ever written on the doctrine of original sin.' "He

had," said the speaker, "the earnestness of a Luther, the genius for humor and wit and satire of a Voltaire, a wide amplitude of imagination, and a greatness of heart and brain that placed him upon an equal footing with the greatest thinkers of antiquity. * * * He stands, at the close of his career, the first great reformer of the age."

Not less notable, as evidence of the widespread appreciation of Ingersoll's love of and efforts for humanity, regardless of creed or race, are the following resolutions, which, proposed by a Christian clergyman, were enthusiastically adopted by the Indiana State Afro-American conference at Indianapolis, on July 26th:—

"*Resolved*, That in the recent death of Robert G. Ingersoll, the nation has lost one of its greatest orators, statesmen, and patriots, and the Afro-Americans one of the greatest champions of civil rights. Mr. Ingersoll always advocated the rights of the oppressed. His ability and his purse were always at the service of our people. On all questions that arose concerning the colored people, Mr. Ingersoll was always found on our side.

"*Resolved*, That this conference, in common with the colored people of this nation, do deplore his death, and hereby tender our greatest sympathy to his bereaved family."

Even more significant, as will be evident from its source, is the next manifestation of regard and sympathy to be presented here. In form of a letter to Mrs. Ingersoll, from Mr. Owen Miller, president of the American Federation of Musicians, it shows how truly appreciated by the profession concerned

were the highest and finest attributes of Ingersoll's many-sided nature:—

"On behalf of 15,000 professional musicians, comprising the American Federation of Musicians, permit me to extend to you our heartfelt and most sincere sympathy in the irreparable loss of the model husband, father, and friend. In him the musicians of not only this country, but of all countries, have lost one whose noble nature grasped the true beauties of our sublime art, and whose intelligence gave those impressions expression in words of glowing eloquence that will live as long as language exists."

Of the numerous memorial meetings and resolutions of societies having a distinctively rationalistic purpose, no specific mention has been, or will be, made. Assumed as inevitable, such meetings and resolutions are less truly indicative of Ingersoll's place in the public esteem and affection than those of a more general character. On the other hand, such of the resolutions as have been quoted, representing, as they do, merely the formal consensus of the meetings concerned, afford but an inadequate notion of the individual feelings of thousands who were present,—feelings which, indeed, it was altogether impossible for any memorial resolutions to convey. They were doubtless most truly voiced by Mr. John McGovern when he said, at Chicago: "This great public meeting is not a proper testimonial to him. Only silence is adequate to express the world's irreparable loss."

Nor can these individual expressions be noted to any considerable extent; and this applies alike

to those of the avowed rationalist and the avowed religionist,—to the extraordinarily eulogistic tributes of hundreds of rationalists as well as to the estimates of a score or so of Christian clergymen who have publicly admitted that, in purity and nobility, the life of Ingersoll was like that of Christ.

But while these individual tributes, for the most part, must be excluded for spacial reasons, there is in connection with them, or nearly all of them, whether of rationalistic or Christian authorship, a fact so peculiarly significant as to preclude the possibility of its being ignored. It is this: The praise which their authors bestow upon Ingersoll is directly proportional to their own recognized artistic and intellectual standing. In other words, they seem to bear with reference to him the same sympathetic mental relation that he himself declares that all men bear to Shakespeare: they get from him all that they are capable of receiving. This may be noted in the various tributes and comments of Garfield, Beecher, Whitman, Booth, Barrett, Joseph Jefferson, Remenyi, Seidl, Conway, Hubbard, *Mark Twain*, and many others in America. It may be noted in the action of Haeckel, "the Darwin of Germany,"—foremost biologist of the world,—who, in 1899, sent his portrait, together with one of his latest works, inscribed "To Colonel Robert Ingersoll, the valorous champion in the struggle of truth." It may be noted in the case of

Björnson, who has translated *Ingersoll* into Norwegian (and into the translator's own heart!), and who writes: "I am very sorry, that, when I was in America, I did not have the opportunity to grasp the hand of a man who, with the sword, fought to free from bodily slavery three millions of people, and who has shown the way to intellectual freedom to many millions more"; and, "I envy the land that brings forth such glorious fruit as an Ingersoll." It may be noted in tributes from just across the Atlantic—in the tribute of Huxley, of Holyoke, and of *Saladin*, who declares that Ingersoll "is with Homer and Tully and Shakespeare and Burns"; and, lastly, in that of Swinburne, who, from the golden summit of English letters, wrote that prior to July 21, 1899, he had one reason for desiring to visit America.

Not less expressive of admiration and devotion than the latter references to the dead, had been the letters from like sources to the living himself. Typical of these is the one quoted, in part, below, —from the poet, novelist, and thinker Edgar Fawcett:—

"UNION CLUB,

"[NEW YORK,] August 10th [1894].

"MY DEAR COLONEL:

"I read your splendid letter in the *World* [on *Is Suicide a Sin?*], and it made me more loyally fond of you than ever; more devotedly your admirer too. That is truly a great deal for me to say, as you know, since my devotion and admiration are both an old story. How ridiculous is the state law! * * * You put the whole thing with

a superb lucidity, and with a gentle eloquence which reminds one of an athlete's hand in a silken glove. The answer of ——— ——— was pitiably vacuous and fatuous, but not more so than that of ——— ———.

"I do so wish, that, in all these big questions, literary men would take you more for a guide than they do, or seem to do. You have, of course, an immense constituency; but your love of letters and your deeply poetic spirit render you worthy of a far greater reverence and respect from *writers* than it seems to me that you receive. I want the brilliancy of your thought to penetrate our literature profoundly and permanently. But of course that will come. The younger generation of writers cannot escape you any more than the air they breathe. You will, indeed, be the air they breathe,—and hence, in many cases, if not all, their inspiration. Especially should the poets love you and sit at your feet. If you die before you see the change, I believe that those who now love you and survive you will see how much of the mere pietistic rubbish in modern poetry has been gradually yet surely swept away by the mighty besom of your fearless and noble intellect. * * *

"Ever affectionately,

"EDGAR FAWCETT"——

an after-song, as it were, to the poem which he had recently addressed to Ingersoll, and of which the last stanza read:—

"And if record of genuis like thine, or of eloquence fiery and deep,
Shall remain to the centuries regnant from centuries lulled into sleep,
Then thy memory as music shall float amid actions and aims yet to be,
And thine influence cling to life's good as the sea-vapors cling to the sea!"

The Himalayan immensity of Ingersoll's labors and achievements can best be realized by viewing him in three separate fields: First, that of Ration-

alism,—in its most radical and comprehensive sense; second, that of the Law; third, that of Politics. For, to be more specific, his vocation was Rationalistic Reform; his two principal avocations were, first, the Law; second, Politics. Beginning inversely to this order, let us therefore finally consider his work and his influence.

1.—In Politics.

We should exceed the requirements of comprehensiveness, while failing of our very object, if we should crowd these pages with Ingersoll's opinions and teachings regarding the numerous questions that concern with ever-varying interest the citizens of the nation. Comparatively at least, many if not most of those questions are of minor and temporary importance. Beside the great fundamentals, they are as clouds that hang for a day on the political horizon, or flit rapidly across it, blown by the winds of partisan intrigue or of selfish personal ambition. Earnestly, masterfully, unanswerably as Ingersoll dealt, from time to time, during a long career, with such questions as the sphere and functions of government, the tariff, revenue, money, and so forth, he must be judged, if adequately and justly, upon far more basic and enduring ones.

In this connection, it seems barely necessary to remind the reader that Ingersoll possessed, in his very physical, intellectual, and moral constitution,

in at least as full measure as any other individual who has lived, the essentials of a profound, broad, and lofty appreciation of the significance and destiny of the American Republic. To paraphrase what he himself said of Humboldt: Great men,—great patriots,—seem to be a part of the infinite—brothers of the mountains and the seas. Ingersoll was one of these. Belonging, as he announced, "to the great church that holds the world within its star-lit aisles,"—loving all lands that love liberty,—he loved his own America most dearly of all. Its geographic amplitude; the wide range of climate,—from the imperishable white of Alaska's "skyish" peaks, to tropic groves of orange, pine, and palm; the magnificent lakes,—oceans within a continent; the mighty Mississippi, "nature's eternal protest against disunion"—"the Father of Waters" that "again goes unvexed to the sea"; the vast and boundless prairies, with golden wheat and bannered corn rustling like the murmur of the sea; the great plateaux,—fit stages for the dramas of Shakespeare, the operas of Wagner; the cañons, wild and grand; the Rockies, awful and sublime; and the Sierras,—nature's dauntless picket-line to guard the Golden Gate—all these tallied with Ingersoll's conception, not only of continental America, but of the physical, intellectual, and moral character of the ideal American. And, believing that "we are moulded and fashioned by our surroundings," that "environment is a sculp-

tor," (iv 5) he believed that the things which I have mentioned tended to make the ideal American:—

"The great plains, the sublime mountains, the great rushing, roaring rivers, shores lashed by two oceans, and the grand anthem of Niagara, mingle and enter into the character of every American citizen, and make him or tend to make him a great and grand character." (ix 162)

And so Ingersoll would have the citizen as grand as the continent. He would have him "stand erect," not only beneath the Stars and Stripes, but beneath its eternal prototype, "the flag of nature, the blue and stars, the peer of every other man." He would have him share the aboriginal freedom of Whitman's declaration, "I'll sound my barbaric yap over the roofs of the world," and of that of Harriet Martineau, "I want to be a free rover on the breezy common of the universe." He longed for the time when every American would declare with him, in his incomparable "Apostrophe to Liberty":—

"O Liberty, thou art the god of my idolatry! Thou art the only Deity that hates the bended knee! In thy vast and unwalled temple, beneath the roofless dome, star-gemmed and luminous with suns, thy worshipers stand erect! They do not cringe, or crawl, or bend their foreheads to the earth. The dust has never borne the impress of their lips.

* * * * * * * *

"Thou askest nought from man except the things that good men hate,—the whip, the chain, the dungeon key." * * * (*Prose-Poems and Selections*, p. 56)

And just as Ingersoll would have the citizen as grand as the continent, so, too, would he have the nation; for his ample appreciation of America's continental grandeur, together with his ardent love of liberty and justice, is evident in the intellectual breadth of his views and teachings on all fundamental political questions.

Strongly devoted, therefore, to the idea of national greatness, he was naturally opposed to the doctrine of "state rights,"—to "mud patriotism," as he termed it,—whenever such "rights" would detract, in the slightest degree, from the rights and the welfare of the nation as an indivisible whole. "I am in favor of this being a Nation. Think of a man gratifying his entire ambition in the State of Rhode Island!" (ix 162) So he believed in the absolute sovereignty of the Federal government in in all disputed questions affecting the people in common.

He taught that the citizen's first duty was to the nation; his second, to his state; that the nation's first duty was to the citizen; its second, to his state. He insisted that the citizen who, voluntarily or otherwise, placed his body between an enemy's bullets and the nation's flag was thereby entitled to the protection of the nation,—not only abroad,—but in any state in which he chanced to be, provided, of course, that the state itself had not afforded him protection. He declared that "any government that will not defend its defenders, and protect

its protectors, is a disgrace to the map of the world." (ix 58)

He believed in just and honest national expansion. He desired the Great Republic to march on as long as she could keep the highway of the right, and wear the mantle of honor and glory. He said, for instance: "I want Cuba whenever Cuba wants us," adding, in characteristic humor, "and I favor the idea of getting her in the notion of wanting us." And again, after expressing great satisfaction over the acquisition of Porto Rico, the Hawaiian Islands, and the Philippines:—

"Let the Republic grow! Let us spread the gospel of Freedom! In a few years I hope that Canada will be ours—I want Mexico—in other words, I want all of North America. I want to see our flag waving from the North Pole." (xii 286)

This he desired for the sake of liberty and humanity. For he regarded his country as "the chart and beacon of the human race"—"the one success of the world"—"the first and only republic that ever existed." And did our fair Columbia ever hear from human lips words of more ardent devotion than these?—

"Oh! I love the old Republic, bounded by the seas, walled by the wide air, domed by heaven's blue, and lit with the eternal stars. I love the Republic; I love it because I love liberty. Liberty is my religion, and at its altar I worship, and will worship." (ix 403)

He was always faithful. Never did he fail to rebuke any enemy of America who chanced to come

to his notice, whether that enemy was a native traitor or a foreign statesman or monarch. Least of all would he brook unjust criticism by a fellow-citizen. Referring, in one of the leading reviews, to such a criticism, he once wrote, by way of rebuke:—

"No American should ever write a line that can be sneeringly quoted by an enemy of the Great Republic."

He loved "Old Glory":—

"Say what you will of parties, say what you will of dishonesty, the holiest flag that ever kissed the air is ours!" "It represents the sufferings of the past, the glories yet to be; and like the bow of heaven, it is the child of storm and sun." (ix 433)

Again:—

"I have been in other countries and have said to myself, 'After all, my country is the best.' And when I came back to the sea and saw the old flag flying, it seemed as though the air, from pure joy, had burst into blossom." (*Prose-Poems and Selections*, p. 279)

These few quotations, typically Ingersollian,—beautiful and inspiring as they are unavoidably brief,—would admirably express the convictions and sentiments of many of our greatest patriots. But how inadequate, in their brevity and fewness, to express the convictions and sentiments of the very brain and heart,—the mighty personality,—from which they blossomed! I wish that I had the genius,—the alembic of thought and feeling,—to do justice to the patriotism, the Americanism,

of Robert G. Ingersoll. But I have not. I wish that I could distil into these fleeting lines the hatred of tyranny, slavery, and caste; the love of liberty and equality; the worship of justice; the gratitude for the founders and defenders of the Republic; the pride in her present, and the confidence in her future, greatness and glory, which are manifest in the *Centennial Oration*, *A Vision Of War*, the political speeches, the reunion addresses, the Decoration Day orations. But I can not. It is a task 'too subtle potent for the capacity of my ruder powers.'

Just here, it is well to remind the reader of what undoubtedly seems a paradox. In rationalism, Ingersoll was a rationalist; in law, Ingersoll was a lawyer; but in politics, Ingersoll was not a politican. He did not even belong to a party, in the usual sense,—that of being a subservient mouthpiece. He said:—

"I do not believe in being the slave or serf or servant of a party. Go with it if it is going your road, and when the road forks, take the one that leads to the place you wish to visit, no matter whether the party goes that way or not. I do not believe in belonging to a party or being the property of any organization. I do not believe in giving a mortgage on yourself or a deed of trust for any purpose whatever." (viii 568)

Again:—

"I go with the party that is traveling my way. I do not pretend to belong to anything or that anything belongs to me. When a party goes my way I go with that party and I stick to it as long as it is traveling my road." (ix 578)

In other words, Ingersoll in politics, like Ingersoll elsewhere, was absolutely true to himself. During the long period of his service for the party that most nearly represented his political principles, he never for a moment lost his independence. He kept the spiked collar off his neck, the tweezers off his tongue, and, spurning the politicians' gold, oft-times ill-gotten, he preserved the perfect veracity of his soul. Although he usually contributed to the sums out of which smaller men were paid for speeches, not one penny ever found its way from a campaign fund to the pocket of Robert G. Ingersoll. Moreover, he invariably paid his own expenses. He used to say to the political managers: "All I want from you is information as to where and when I can do the most good; and I will be on hand at the specified hour."

Such manifestations of individuality,—such extraordinary fidelity to principle and conscience,—would alone have titled him patriot, in the highest and noblest sense; but, as previously indicated, it is far from being his only claim upon our memory as a patriot. Indeed, (to summarize) his fearless denunciation of slavery, the Dred Scott decision, and the Fugitive Slave Law, while a Democratic candidate for Congress, in 1860; his masterful rallying of the local Democracy of Peoria to the support of Lincoln, as against the Confederacy; his support of Lincoln and the Union with his sword, during a part of the three succeeding years;

his refusal to sell his mental manhood for the governorship of Illinois, in 1868; his eager response to the call to battle in subsequent years, whenever and wherever he saw in peril the political principles upon which depended, in his opinion, the safety and welfare of the Republic; and his clear-visioned appreciation of the latter's meaning and mission, and of the position it occupies in relation to the other nations of the earth, not only demonstrate that he was one of the greatest of patriots, but afford a reasonable and logical foundation for the conviction, that, had it not been for the prejudice of the masses, he would have become in practice, as he already was in theory, one of the greatest of statesmen.

Manifesting, even in youth, the most characteristic American traits, and placed, during that period, in an environment constantly agitated with questions of the gravest import,—questions which awakened, among the masses, far wider and profounder concern than do any similar ones of the present day,—it was inevitable that he should become interested in politics at an early age. However, his noteworthy labors therein did not begin until he was about twenty-seven years old, when, in 1860, as previously stated, he was a candidate for Congress. It was in his own local campaign of that year, as a Democrat, that he laid the foundations of the oratorical fame which he subsequently achieved in one of the national conventions, and

which he so admirably maintained in several national campaigns, of the Republican party. Long before the close of the Civil War, his advice and oratorical services were in urgent political request. Nor were they but twice withheld. Even when treachery and ingratitude, in fullest measure, were his lot, they were given with a cheerfulness that was heroic—given, not to men, not to a party, but given for the triumph of principles on which depended, in his opinion, the welfare of the Re public.

Beginning with the second campaign of Lincoln, in 1864, and excepting two, he participated in every Republican national campaign that was held during a period of thirty-two years, his services ending, as before stated, with the campaign of McKinley, in 1896.

And, first viewing it quantitatively, what a vast amount of work he performed! In the Hayes campaign, for example, entering the field unusually early, he delivered two or three addresses on at least every third day until the election. And his addresses, instead of the fifteen-minute conversational sort now in vogue, were from two to three hours or so in length. Moreover, they were supplemented by numerous private interviews; for, wherever he went, he was beset by local politicians and members of the press, eager for a personal word. Of the twelve volumes comprised in his works, the single volume containing such of his political utterances as have been permanently preserved gives but a meager

idea of the extent of his labors in the field concerned.

And, next viewing those labors qualitatively (whether or not we accept any or all of his political principles), how shall we find words to do him even simple justice? We may say that he possessed every conceivable excellence of the great popular orator; but this conveys no adequate meaning to those who are not personally familiar with his power and charm, and who are imperfectly familiar with the written accounts and oral traditions of his eloquence. We may state, on the best of authority,[1] that, when he was only twenty-seven years of age, or in 1860, he actually drew to himself, at an "overflow" meeting, in Chicago, the greater part of an audience which Stephen A. Douglas was addressing near by, and that, thirty-six years later, or in 1896, in the same city, he held, for over two hours, as though it were entranced, an audience of twenty thousand people which, a few nights before, had completely disconcerted and discomfited two veteran Republican orators whose names are familiar on both sides of the Atlantic.[2] But even this account seems inadequate to convey an impression of his powers. Possessing, as I have stated, every conceivable oratorical excellence, there was, in the largest and most heterogeneous assembly, no mental or temperamental element whose interest he could not arouse and hold. This may be best real-

[1] The late Phillip Hoyne, Esq., of Chicago, who was a warm personal friend of Douglas.

[2] Related by a gentleman who accompanied Ingersoll to the meeting.

ized by observing how widely divergent in him were the two poles of expressional genius. He was the most florid and imaginative orator that ever uttered English speech, and, at the same time, he was the most practical. He had the simplicity of expression that is born of profundity of thought. He was as deep as the sea, but as clear as the sky. His sentences were crystallized light. He was preeminently the teacher of the masses. Farmers, mechanics, laborers, used to say, on hearing his explanation of a political or an economic question, "Well, I understand that *now*." He simply could not be misunderstood.

His influence on the electorate was believed to be exactly commensurate with the extent of his oratorical efforts. That he was a vote-winner was the opinion of the political managers. They used to make some desperate appeals to him from "doubtful" sections. I quote one of those appeals, a telegram, without its date and signature: "For God's sake come here and pull us out. You are the only one on earth who can do it." During the campaign of 1896, the Chicago *Inter-Ocean*, in the course of a lengthy editorial appreciation of Ingersoll's genius, remarked: "*The Tribune* truly and pertinently says, that, 'If Colonel Ingersoll had the physical strength he had at thirty, and could be turned loose in the doubtful districts of the West, he would cut a wide swath of conversions as far as his voice could reach. He is the inimitable American orator of

our time.'" When we consider the number and the source of similar expressions, and how near he came, in 1876, to making Blaine the next president, we are inclined to infer something more than coincidence from the fact that in the only two campaigns in which Ingersoll took no part, namely, those of Blaine and Harrison, in 1884 and 1892, respectively, the Republican party was defeated. And, even ignoring this as being too problematical, we are still confident that there was not in Ingersoll's day, among professional politicians themselves, a man whose political judgment and services were more highly valued than his; and that, all in all, he was (to be necessarily paradoxical) the most potent and interesting extra-political individuality which the political history of his country reveals.

2.—In the Law.

As stated in Chapter II, Ingersoll commenced the practice of law in his twenty-second year, or in 1855, and continued its practice until 1899,—a period of forty-four years. He was admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of the United States on February 2, 1865, during the term beginning in December, 1864, and, as indicated in Chapter IV, was attorney-general of Illinois from February 28, 1867, to January 11, 1869. Before the court just mentioned, he appeared in numerous

oral arguments, not one of which, as far as is known, was ever reduced to print or writing.[1]

As a counselor and advocate, Ingersoll was among the very first of his time, the equal of the very first of any other time—as great and formidable a warrior as ever fought for justice beneath the ægis of the law. It was not what he learned by rote from text-books, decisions, reports, and so forth that made him a great counselor. An individual can no more learn to be a truly great legal adviser than he or she can learn to be a truly great inventor, metaphysician, wit, musical conductor, or poet. The seeds of genius are in the mental soil at birth; and unfavorable indeed must be the conditions if they do not fill the air with fragrance, the land with fruitage. As in the other departments in which he was supreme, it is doubtful that in the law Ingersoll ever deliberately learned more than a small fraction of what he knew. Individuals of talent learn details; individuals of genius know principles, universals. Ingersoll knew law from the start. He thought law. He possessed that ethical instinct and insight, that innate sense of equity and justice, that unerring and implacable logic, which are its very foundations. It is said that if he ever erred in his judgment of the common law,

[1] "A perfect wonder of eloquence and power, he made a speech before the Supreme Court in Washington last winter which was an absolute whirlwind, and carried away in its resistless current even that august bench."—Judge Jeremiah S. Black, ex-attorney-general, in the Philadelphia *Times*.

it was because the latter, in some minor respect, failed to square with his sense of justice.

"When I have a difficult case to consider," he once stated, "I first make up my mind as to what the law *ought* to be, and then I go in search of that law, and rarely fail to find it."

"Every student of Colonel Ingersoll felt his extraordinary gifts as a lawyer," writes *Octave Thanet* (Miss Alice French), whose brother studied law in Ingersoll's office. "'He was a great lawyer,' said my brother. 'He had a most remarkable power to go straight to the principles of things. Often he would say to me: "Now, the law used to be so and so; and the reasons for it were so and so; but the reasons have changed, and now they are so and so; and therefore the law should have changed also—French, you look up the decisions!" So I would look up the decisions—and find them.'"

Ingersoll's quickness "in grasping the salient points of a case," writes another of his intimate associates, "was equally remarkable. For example, Colonel Ingersoll and a lawyer who was and is one of the leaders of the New York bar, met at the office of a New York banker to consult about a complicated and important legal matter in which the banker was interested. The matter was new to the Colonel. He listened for a while to the statement of the case, asked a number of questions, and then suddenly announced that he understood

it all, and stated his opinion regarding it. This was followed by putting on his hat and walking out. The lawyer associated with him regarded him with surprise, and when he had gone said he could not pass on such a complicated and important matter in any such off-hand way. He must have time to study it. Yet when he did arrive at a conclusion, he was obliged to agree with the Colonel in every particular. Stories of this kind regarding him might be multiplied indefinitely." [1]

And even the extraordinary qualifications thus far mentioned did not surpass his faithfulness to clients. Once satisfied that a client was in the right, the latter's cause, his innermost feelings, were Ingersoll's own. Instantly he stood in his client's position—robed in the mantle of sympathy. Ingersoll the counselor and advocate could put himself as absolutely in place of the client as Ingersoll the humanitarian could put himself in place of the outcast—as absolutely as grand old *Lear* on the heath put himself in place of the 'poor naked wretches that bide the pelting of the pitiless storm.' Or, again, like Whitman, Ingersoll could say: "I

[1] *Ingersoll the Man*, a pamphlet, by Clarence S. Brown, p. 7.

He was the recipient of many compliments at the hands of eminent jurists. For example, Judge Sidney Breeze, of Peoria, one of the most brilliant lawyers of Illinois, frequently invited Ingersoll to occupy the bench with him; Judge Drummond, of Chicago, did the same; and, in Washington, one of the justices of the Supreme Court, prior to "handing down" his opinions, often requested Ingersoll's advice thereon.

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(Æt. 44)
From a photograph by Houseworth, San Francisco.

am the hounded slave, I wince at the bite of the dogs." Or: "Judge not as the judge judges, but as the sun falling upon a helpless thing."

A case once rightly in his thoughts, never left them day or night, until he saw the end,—until his client either received the palm of victory, or was shrouded in the rayless gloom of defeat. There was no possible source of information from which Ingersoll did not draw. No stone was left unturned. Did the case require historical, genealogical, mechanical, chemical, medical, or bacteriological research, he made the research. To apply in this connection a saying which he applied in another, the case "was in his head all day and in his heart all night." Especially is this true of the early days of his forensic career, when many of his cases were of the "criminal" sort. And in later years it was perhaps the chief reason why his practice was confined to cases of a "civil" nature, in which other considerations than human sympathy play the leading rôle. The tragedy and pathos of criminal practice weighed heavily upon him.

In the selection of a jury, in the examination of witnesses, in objections to the court, in short, from beginning to end in the management of a case, he was "the soul of courtesy." What is particularly remarkable, he would not quarrel with opposing counsel; and as opposing counsel very quickly learned not to quarrel with him, the trials in which he took part were generally models of order and

decorum. He was alert, tactful, resourceful, original, unique. No one ever knew what was "coming next." It may be safely said that there were two wise rules for the guidance of his opponents: first, do not become his opponent; second, having unfortunately become such, let him be unmolested, as far as exigencies permit.

Nor does our enumeration, even thus far, include all of his splendid qualifications as a lawyer. Passing hastily over at least one of the most important of them,—mastery of the foundations and intricacies of the law,—there remains to be considered another of his qualifications which alone would have placed him among the very first of his profession in any age. That there was nothing within the the realm of possibility which he could not accomplish with a jury is well known. Himself the most human of men, he understood, as clearly and fully as lawyer ever did, the capacities, susceptibilities, weaknesses, prejudices, and predilections of his kind. As the sculptor knows his mass of clay, so Ingersoll knew his fellow-beings; and over those masses of animate clay, his power was even more nearly absolute than the sculptor's over his. Ingersoll could make his clay laugh and weep and reason,—reason in his own way: the sculptor can only make his clay seem to do these things. And of the two, Ingersoll manifested the more composite genius. With a personality magnetically irresistible; overflowing with good nature,—enjoying

every pulse and breath; frank and candid; all but infallible in memory; lightning itself at repartee, but never wounding unless compelled, and then instantly ready with the balm of humor; saying just the right thing at the right time, and nothing at the wrong time; eloquent on even the commonplace,—sublime on the sublime; able to clarify at once the roiliest problem,—to put the complex and intricate in words that even a child not only could, but must, understand—with all these attributes and powers, he was the most impressive and convincing advocate that ever appealed to the heart and brain of an American jury.

As tending to support this claim, the following account of his conduct of a case at Metamora, Ill., during his early forensic career, is of typical interest. Two farmers had quarreled concerning a boundary-line, and one had killed the other with a spade. Ingersoll was counsel for the accused. Instead of bringing the latter's wife and children into court, as another advocate probably would have done, Ingersoll chose to rely wholly upon his own unaided influence with the jury. He presented his case from the standpoint of the evidence and of the law, and then—he painted a picture with words,—a picture of a lowly cottage, at twilight. The wife and children were standing at the little gate,—the children wondering why papa was so late,—the wife peering into the dimming distance for him who was still the one of all the world. And with the last

touch to the pathetic scene, the lawyer-poet suddenly said to the jury:—

"Now, gentlemen, are you going to let this man go home?"

"Yes, 'Bob,' we are!" came the sobbing answer from the burly foreman; and "Bob" dropped into a seat as though he himself had been shot.

We must not here overlook a fact which reflects still more to his individual greatness: In the court-room he always labored at a disadvantage that no other eminent American lawyer experienced—the disadvantage of religious prejudice.[1] And what other disadvantage could have been greater? Can it be imagined that there was a community which could have furnished, in the usual course, twelve men of whom one or more would not be prejudiced against Ingersoll because of religious belief? Can it be imagined that in another lawyer precisely the same powers which Ingersoll possessed would not have had far greater effect upon the average jury? We who have long observed the general tendency to withhold his rightful dues know that it can not. How much higher, then, than we otherwise would must we, in simple justice, rate his abilities as a legal advocate?

May we not extend our inquiries even further? Is it not doubtful, taking into consideration all of the requisites of the really great *counselor and ad-*

[1] A distinguished lawyer once publicly taunted Ingersoll by reference to this fact.

vocate, that another as great as Ingersoll ever practised at the American bar? What other American has combined, in as full and rounded measure, the many necessary qualities and attributes? Let us be candid,—reasonable. In what type of man should we naturally look, not for a great, but for the greatest, counselor and advocate? Should we look to one who was profound in law, but who was not an orator? Should we look to one who was an orator, but who was superficial in law? Should we look to one who, in the law, trusted in the reasonable, the natural, the probable, and who was an orator, but who, outside the law, trusted in the unreasonable, the supernatural, the improbable? "Assuredly not," will be yonr reply to all of these questions. "We should look to him who was intellectually free; who possessed the widest horizon; who had the most perfect sense of justice; who was the greatest logician; who relied absolutely upon reason, observation, and experience,—upon the reasonable, the natural, the probable,—not only in law, but in every possible department of mental effort, and who was a great orator,—one who could set his thoughts to verbal music that would enrapture, enthrall, convince." Then you would turn, were he still among us, to Robert G. Ingersoll.

In making this statement, I am unmindful neither of his possible limitations nor of others' excellencies. Let us see. There was one other American who was perhaps as versatile,—as "many-sided,"—as

Ingersoll, but he was neither lawyer nor orator. There was another American who was a great orator (as great as he could be without having been born a poet) and a great lawyer (as great as he could be without a perfect sense of justice), but he was not a universal logician; he believed in the supernatural; he defended the Fugitive Slave Law. There was yet another American who was profound in law, and profound in justice and mercy, but he was not particularly versatile; he was not free from superstition; and he was not a great orator. Still others were profound in law, but they were not great orators; their mental horizon was narrow; they were believers in superstition.

"I once told an eminent jurist," says Haeckel, "that the tiny spherical ovum from which every man is developed is as truly endowed with life as the embryo of two, or seven, or even nine months; he laughed incredulously." [1] More than one of America's great lawyers would have done the same. But Ingersoll? Would he have laughed at a biological truth with which not only the scientist, but every intelligent layman, ought to be perfectly familiar? The answer is that Ingersoll was as conversant with this very Haeckel, with the principal facts, phenomena, and laws of biology, "from moner to man," as he was with the common law itself. Into the lap of his intellect, Humboldt,

[1] *The Riddle of the Universe*, p. 7.

Darwin, and Wallace, Huxley, Tyndall, and Helmholtz, had emptied their glittering treasures. Indeed, this list might properly include the name of every savant from Haeckel back to Bacon. In philosophy, he had ranged from Socrates to Spencer. In literature, the characters of Shakespeare, Dickens, Balzac, Hugo, and many others were as familiar to him as the members of his own household. There was not in English a great poem, whether in prose or verse, that did not linger in his heart to polish anon his native graces with its ennobling influence; and in the gallery of his memory, the marbles of the Greeks,—pathetic even in their original completeness,—pointed with double pathos their mutilated arms toward the remnants of a once powerful and tyrannical, but now fast weakening superstition, in the presence of which he had ever stood whole-souled, sane, and free.

Nor have we even yet exhausted the list of attributes and accomplishments that Ingersoll made auxiliary to his extraordinary qualifications as a counselor and advocate. He was familiar with all the mental paths that man had traveled—from midnight to dawn—from dawn to noon. He understood the inscriptions on all the mile-posts along the way—the victories and achievements.

His scope and perception were astounding. He had been known to puzzle mechanics, inventors, navigators, with questions in their own specialties, and then vex them by answering his own questions,

after they had failed to do so. He could criticize a novel, a play, a painting,[1] a poem, as masterfully as he could a legal brief, a political platform, or a theological creed; and, as indicated in Chapter IX, his knowledge and appreciation of music would have done credit to many a professional musician.

It may be that perfect freedom of thought and encyclopedic knowledge are negligible factors in estimating forensic capabilities. It may be that familiarity with the truths of science; that the intellectual capacity essential to comprehension of the great systems of philosophy; that the insight into human nature imparted by Shakespeare and the great novelists; and that the subtlety, profundity, and sublimity of thought and feeling involved in understanding and appreciating the greatest poetry and the greatest music—it may be that all these can add nothing to the qualifications of the counselor and advocate. But if they can, then I unhesitatingly declare that such versatility as I have indicated, added to the eminent forensic

[1] In company with a number of others, Ingersoll was visiting a collection of paintings.

"I think this is a copy," he remarked, referring to a particular picture.

"Oh no," replied the person in charge of the collection, "they are all originals."

"Well," rejoined Ingersoll, "this painting has a sort of cramped effect which no original would have, I think."

The person in charge still insisted that all of the pictures were originals. But not long afterwards, it was ascertained that the painting was, in fact, a copy—a copy by the original artist, I think.

abilities which I have also indicated, and which everybody admits that he possessed, must necessarily place Ingersoll, the capacities of all alike considered, at the head of American lawyers.

Of the many hundreds of cases that he tried, during the forty-four years of his legal career, none has been specifically mentioned in the present chapter, and only five were mentioned in previous chapters—the Munn trial, the "Star-Route" trials, the Reynolds blasphemy trial, the Davis will case, and the Russell will case. To these should be added the Canmer case, and that of the Bankers' and Merchants' Telegraph Company against the Western Union Telegraph Company, in which Ingersoll secured a verdict of $1,500,000. These cases were and are mentioned, obviously not because the labor which they involved was necessarily greater than that of many others of which the general public scarcely heard, but because of their interest and magnitude in the eyes of that public.

Of Ingersoll's practice before the courts of the different states, before various United States circuit courts, and before the United States Supreme Court, I shall attempt no details. Nor shall I specifically note more of the generous compliments that were extended to him by both the bench and the bar, from ocean to ocean, from north to south. No such array of particulars is essential to my present object—a general indication of his abilities

and achievements in the law. For it is already apparent that in this, the more important of his avocations, his abilities were extraordinary, his achievements monumental; that, all relevant things considered, he was the most conspicuous figure of his century.

3.—In the Field of Rationalism.

It will have been observed, that I have thus far given no very definite indication of the period or periods covered by Ingersoll's anti-theological propaganda, and no sort of indication of its geographic scope. And it will doubtless be agreed, that, in so far as I have failed to do this, I have failed to do justice, not only to his physicomental powers, but to the zeal, enthusiasm, and aggressiveness with which he consecrated his life to the cause of physical and intellectual liberty.

In contemplating the work of Ingersoll, we must exclude the mere thinker and the mere writer. It is something, no doubt, to sit in the secluded luxury of the study,—in the gracious ease of the arm-chair,—and think that Christendom is wrong. It is something more, under the same conditions, to put one's thoughts into magnificent discourses to be read in the luxury of other studies,—in the ease of other arm-chairs. But it is far greater still to go out into a stolid and insolent world,—into "the byways and hedges,"—month after month,

year after year, decade after decade, and *tell* Christendom that it is wrong—*tell Christendom that it is wrong*, and lay, in scornful defiance, upon the altars of Ignorance, Bigotry, and Hypocrisy, the holy offerings of honest conviction. And this, in brief, did Robert G. Ingersoll. For more than forty years, with all his might, he battled in every direction and quarter for the universal liberty of mankind. Of course, not all of this period was devoted to fighting the beleaguering hosts of superstition. But when, in his earlier days, he was not fighting both mental and physical slavery with his tongue, he was fighting physical slavery with his sword—fighting those who would substitute for the Great Republic,—that radiant hope and glory of mankind,—an autocracy of slavery. And when, after physical slavery was dead, he was from any cause unable to fight mental slavery with his tongue, he used his pen.

As already stated, Ingersoll delivered his first public anti-theological discourse when he was twenty-three years old, or in 1856. His career as a rationalistic reformer may therefore be said to have begun in that year: it ended in 1899,—a period of forty-three years. From 1856 to 1860, few if any rationalistic discourses were delivered. In the latter year, as stated in Chapter III, he delivered *Progress*, the first of his anti-theological lectures of which any authentic report has been preserved. He did not again lecture until 1864,

when *Progress* was repeated. His next lecture was delivered in 1869. After that year, he lectured continually, excepting from 1885 to 1890, when the condition of his throat would not permit.

"After he fairly had started on his agnostic career, fanatics commenced to threaten his life. Many a time he mounted the platform with a letter in his pocket stating that he would never live to finish his address."[1] Such letters were usually written in red ink and signed, "A Lover of Jesus," "A Friend of the Lord," or with some other *nom de plume* of like import. Typical of these communications was one delivered by special postal delivery, in Chicago, to the secretary of Ingersoll, just before the latter began his lecture. It read, in substance: "If you go on the platform to-night and speak against the Bible, you will not live to see your wife and children again." Although this letter was not delivered to the addressee until after the conclusion of his lecture, and would have had no more effect in changing the course of events had it been delivered before than had the many others of its kind, it represented one of those threats which, one would think, were not to be despised. "Nothing is so blind and cruel as religious fanaticism. The spirit that lighted the fire around Servetus, that deluged Paris with blood on St. Bartholomew's Day, that devastated Germany in the

[1] *Ingersoll the Man*, a pamphlet, by Clarence S. Brown, p. 9.

Thirty Years' War, that caused the unspeakable horrors of the inquisition—something of that spirit still lingers to-day. More than one half-crazed brain would have imagined that it was doing God's service by striking down this Antichrist, and that an eternity of bliss would open for it for performing such an act."[1] In support of this, it may be noted that one man has voluntarily stated that he once attended a lecture resolved and prepared to shoot Ingersoll, but that, when he came under the influence of the latter's voice and personality, he was unable to consummate his dastardly purpose. And this would seem to confirm, in a measure at least, the assertion of one who knew Ingersoll intimately, that mere association for any length of time with the great humanitarian would have transformed even a criminal into a model citizen.

As to the number and character of the anonymous correspondents previously mentioned, we may further judge by the following extract from an interview published in the Chicago *Times* of May 29, 1881 :—

"Yes : I get a great many anonymous letters—some letters in which God is asked to strike me dead, others of an exceedingly insulting character, others almost idiotic, others exceedingly malicious, and others insane, others written in an exceedingly good spirit, winding up with the information that I must certainly be damned. Others express wonder that God allowed me to live at all, and that, having made the mistake, he does not instantly correct it by killing me. Others

[1] Ibid.

prophecy that I will yet be a minister of the gospel; but, as there has never been any softening of the brain in our family, I imagine that the prophecy will never be fulfilled. Lately, on opening a letter and seeing that it is upon this subject, and without a signature, I throw it aside without reading. I have so often found them to be grossly ignorant, insulting and malicious, that as a rule I read them no more." (viii 99)

But, to return to the threats, Ingersoll cared precisely the same for any fanatic violence that might spring from orthodoxy as he did for orthodoxy itself: he treated both with that disdainful and scornful defiance which, in his estimation, their despicableness deserved. His purpose and resolution were never tempered by the thought of deviation. "As long as the smallest coal is red in hell," he said, in 1884, "I am going to keep on." He asked and gave no quarter; and he recognized no flag but the flag of surrender.

During the forty-three years of his anti-theological crusade, he lectured in every town and city of any considerable size and importance in every state and territory of the United States, except North Carolina, Mississippi, Indian Territory, and Oklahoma, and in many towns and cities in Canada. And in nearly all these places, he lectured not once, but many times, and in some of the larger places, not only many times during his career, but two or three times every season. Year after year, he returned; year after year, the size, intelligence, and enthusiasm of his audiences increased. He had ten eager, sympathetic listeners in 1899 to one in 1860. The entire theological subsoil of North

America was honeycombed by his eloquent aggressiveness—converted into vast catacombs for the orthodox dead. His repertoire was always new, changing, inexhaustible. Of the nearly thirty different lectures which he wrote, there was, in effect, a new one for every audience. Thus, on a lecture-tour in one season, he would deliver at A, *The Liberty of Man, Woman, and Child;* at B, *Some Mistakes of Moses;* at C, *Why I Am An Agnostic*, etc. The next season, with the same itinerary, the order of delivery would be reversed, or all of the lectures would be different. Verily could it have been said of him: "Age cannot wither, nor custom stale," his "infinite variety." Learned "pulpit orators" might be talking to air in the pews, their churches garish with placards of "sociables," "bazars," and amateur theatricals; but Ingersoll, in the veriest "city of churches," on a brief notice (hardly noticeable), would fill the largest theater, from the first row of the orchestra, to the last row in "the gallery of the gods." And he could fill the same theater, on the same subject, whenever he chose to return. Indeed, a large majority of his audience would have had him return on the following day. For, from opening to close, his discourse never palled; his hearers were never cloyed. Instead, they were impatient for a wider and deeper view of that new world of love and liberty of which he had opened before their blinded eyes an enchanting and inspiring vista.

To oratory born—filling the stage like "an antique god"; graceful as a willow when zephyrs stir the languid air; his face as perfect a mirror of his thoughts as the stream over which the willow bends is a perfect mirror of all that is above; with wit like lightning, humor as kindly as autumn, logic as cold as winter; with the directness of light, the candor of day, the pathos of twilight—a master of verbal melody—he lingered in the memory of auditors like a faultless production of *Die Walküre* or of *Hamlet.*

How amply this general representation is warranted by the concrete facts of Ingersoll's anti-theological career may be seen in such accounts as follow.

The first is from *The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer* of May 10, 1880:—

"Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll lectured last night at Pike's Opera-House on his new theme of 'What Must We Do To Be Saved?' His vanity must have been touched by the flattering reception which met him. Seldom has such a large and intelligent audience been crowded into the four walls of the house as were there when Colonel Ingersoll stepped upon the stage. Parquet, dress-circle, gallery, balcony, stalls, boxes, aisles, lobbies, and stairways were filled with entranced listeners, while even the stage was utilized to seat some of the hearers. The lecture, which lasted over two hours, was listened to with charmed ears and greeted, from time to time, with sincere applause, loud laughter, and cheers of approbation. It was an audience *en rapport* with the speaker and the doctrines he advanced. To attempt a report of such a lecture *verbatim* would be to fill columns with words which, coming from other than Mr. Ingersoll's flowery lips, accompanied by the embellishment of his charmed presence, would be stripped of more than half their force.

"The lecturer came upon the stage without introduction. He needed none, for few of his hearers had never seen him before. Most of them were there, not out of curiosity to hear and see a man they had heard of, but to hear a man whose eloquence had charmed them on a former occasion. There is that to be said to recommend Colonel Ingersoll as a lecturer. If he once succeeds in securing an audience, he is sure of it on any future occasion."

From the Milwaukee *Evening Wisconsin* :—

" * * * He is a born orator. Of fine physical proportions, graceful carriage, possessing a large and finely moulded head, an expressive countenance, and genial smile, a voice of great compass, and lungs and throat that seem incapable of failure under the severest strain, his audience receives a favorable impression from the moment that he steps to the front of the rostrum, and utters his first sentence. This impression is deepened by the unobstructed flow of language, his fine intonation, his graceful, yet emphatic, gestures, his vigorous sentences—now sparkling with humor, now loaded with stinging sarcasm or terrible denunciation, and now unfolding into the most splendid imagery. He seems never to lack a word, or a simile, but the volume of his discourse flows on with such fullness, ease, and power, that one wonders it can ever stop. * * * "

From the Boston *Herald* of Monday April 19, 1880 :—

"When the Boston Theatre is enlarged, it will be able to contain a greater audience than that which assembled within its walls last evening—not before. The announcement that Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll was to lecture caused so great a rush for seats that all the desirable sittings were taken two or three days in advance of the appointed time; and when the rotund figure and jolly countenance of the orator appeared upon the stage, last evening, and stepped forward to the reading desk at the footlights, he was greeted by an audience that not only filled every seat in the vast auditorium, even to the upper gallery, but overflowed into the aisles and doorways and thronged the lobbies. There were over three thousand people present. It was an audience, too, which any speaker might be proud to address,

for it was composed of ladies and gentlemen whose bearing was that of intelligence and refinement, and who, as far as outward appearance would indicate, were fully on a level with the church-goers of this city."

The impression made in the midst of New England culture was repeated in the western mining town, as this extract from *Territorial Enterprise*, Virginia City, Nev., will show :—

"An overflowing house received Col. Ingersoll, at National Guard Hall, last evening, and hung entranced upon his words, from the commencement to the close of his incomparable lecture. Of that lecture, we can speak only in general terms to-day. It is a wonderful production. All the beauties of the language; all the enchantment of eloquence; all the splendors of imagination, the plays of wit, the eccentricities of a subtle genius, are handled in it. His appeals for liberty to man; for liberty and protection to woman; for liberty, protection, and kindness to children, are as beautiful as anything in our language. This might be extended over columns, but it is enough to say that the lecture is charming throughout, and that its teachings are pure and true."

These reportorial items,—quoted as being only fairly representative of the thousands that are available,—might be supplemented with the accounts of many men and women of national and international fame. Thus Elizabeth Cady Stanton, after declaring that "the future historian will rank Robert G. Ingersoll peerless among the great and good men of the nineteenth century," relates, in the course of her tribute, the following :—

"I heard Mr. Ingersoll many years ago in Chicago. The hall seated 5,000 people; every inch of standing-room was also occupied;

aisles and platform crowded to overflowing. He held that vast audience for three hours so completely entranced that when he left the platform no one moved, until suddenly, with loud cheers and applause, they recalled him. He returned smiling and said: 'I'm glad you called me back, as I have something more to say. Can you stand another half-hour?' 'Yes: an hour, two hours, all night,' was shouted from various parts of the house; and he talked on until midnight, with unabated vigor, to the delight of his audience. This was the greatest triumph of oratory I had ever witnessed. It was the first time he delivered his matchless speech [lecture], 'The Liberty of Man, Woman, and Child.'"

And Mrs. Stanton continues :—

"I have heard the greatest orators of this century in England and America; O'Connell in his palmiest days, on the Home Rule question; Gladstone and John Bright in the House of Commons; Spurgeon, James and Stopford Brooks, in their respective pulpits; our own Wendell Phillips, Henry Ward Beecher, and Webster and Clay, on great occasions; the stirring eloquence of our anti-slavery orators, both in Congress and on the platform, but none of them ever equalled Robert Ingersoll in his highest flights."

So, too, Dr. Conway, in *My Pilgrimage to the Wise Men of the East* (p. 19), names Ingersoll as "the most striking figure in religious America," and gives, among other things, the following personal impression :—

"In 1881, being on a visit to Boston, my wife and I found ourselves in the Parker House with the Ingersolls, and went over to Charlestown to hear him lecture. His subject was 'Some Mistakes of Moses,' and it was a memorable experience. Our lost leaders,—Emerson, Thoreau, Theodore Parker,—who had really spoken to disciples rather than to the nation, seemed to have contributed something to form this organ by which their voice could reach the people. Every variety of power was in this orator,—logic and poetry, humor and imagination, simplicity and dramatic art, moral earnestness and boundless sym-

pathy. The wonderful power which Washington's attorney-general, Edmund Randolph, ascribed to Thomas Paine of insinuating his ideas equally into learned and unlearned had passed from Paine's pen to Ingersoll's tongue. The effect on the people was indescribable. The large theatre was crowded from pit to dome. The people were carried from plaudits of his argument to loud laughter at his humorous sentences, and his flexible voice carried the sympathies of the assembly with it, at times moving them to tears by his pathos."

"The country," observes Dr. Conway, "was full of incidents and anecdotes relating to these marvellous lectures"; and he adds, later: "I knew that he was leading an insurrection of human hearts against the inhumanities of the Bible and the cruelties of dogmatic propagandism."

A few sentences from the tribute of Mr. Debbs, the eminent Socialist (who is, of course, fundamentally opposed to the economic views which Ingersoll represented), may well be included here:—

"The name of Robert G. Ingersoll is in the pantheon of the world. More than any other man who ever lived he destroyed religious superstition. * * * He was the Shakespeare of oratory—the greatest that the world has ever known. Ingersoll lived and died far in advance of his time. He wrought nobly for the transformation of this world into a habitable globe; and long after the last echo of detraction has been silenced, his name will be loved and honored, and his fame will shine resplendent, for his immortality is fixed and glorious."

That no other orator or speaker of the nineteenth century addressed as many people as Ingersoll is very probable. That none other uniformly made such deep and lasting impressions is more than probable—it is historically certain. It is quite un-

likely that any notable percentage of such of his hearers as were previously orthodox departed from him with their theological views unchanged.

I would here revert, with emphasis, to one fact: It was not as a rationalistic propagandist that Ingersoll first became generally known. It was as a patriot—as one who loved his country, not because it was his country, but because he loved liberty. It was as a lawyer who had gained a brilliant reputation as a defender of those threatened with injustice. It was as a hard-headed and trusted political adviser, and, preeminently, as an orator with lips "breathing eloquence, that might have soothed a tiger's rage, or thawed the cold heart of a conqueror."

Wherever he chose to go, his reputation preceded and assured him of respectful and interested attention. In national and social questions, he was the guiding-star of great numbers of his fellow-citizens; and consequently, when he decided publicly to break the fetters and the idols of tradition, he obtained a far more extensive and honorable hearing than he would have obtained had he first appeared solely as an opponent of "revealed" religion.

Still, it was charged by some that he was not profound; but I have observed that the charge was invariably made by superficial people. As a matter of fact, with all his wit, humor, raillery, persiflage, he was the profoundest logician that ever appealed to the intellect of an American audience. There

was logic even in his laughter. He passed the cup of mirth, and in its sparkling foam were found the gems of unanswerable truth.

Ingersoll's auditors realized, as never before, that they were being addressed by a *man!* To see him was to believe that he was sincere, to hear him was to know it, to understand him was to be convinced that he was right.

Nor was it due entirely to his own attributes and efforts that he reached and swayed so many minds: opponents gave a helping hand. Whenever he delivered lectures or published religious or sociological opinions which were particularly objectionable to the orthodox, the newspapers, as we have seen, were filled with "answers." To some of them he replied. Many thousands who probably would not otherwise have heard of the problems at issue thus learned of their existence. Sometimes the good people of the blue-law states refused to rent him a theater, removed his lithographs from the bill-boards, or threatened him with arrest for "blasphemy." Overcrowded houses and copious reports of his sayings were the invariable result. And of course "the poor little ministers" preached. If they only could have realized that theology is not to be affirmed by reason, what energy they would have conserved! and how they would have curtailed the influence of their foe!

Another significant fact must be considered here: Ingersoll made science his handmaid. To be sure,

he was not a scientist, experimentally, but he was wonderfully familiar with others' discoveries, as we have previously noted; and he could describe them better than could the discoverers. He popularized the work of the great masters, and championed the masters themselves. Every scientist worthy to hold aloft the sacred torch will also hold in tender reverence the memory of Robert G. Ingersoll. Many thousands first heard the names of Humboldt, Tyndall, Helmholtz, Darwin, Huxley, Haeckel, and others from his ardent lips. And he reached a far more heterogeneous class than those authors could ever reach through their works. Their legitimate audiences are small, at best. Ingersoll went out after the laity, bound them with the golden chain of his eloquence, and threw science in their faces. And they understood; for, as before stated, he was a master of simplification—preëminently the teacher of the masses. The average person got more chemistry, physics, geology, biology, from *Why I Am An Agnostic* than he could have derived in a month from technical works.

Who will say, that this dissemination of scientific and philosophical truths did not have, on the theological mind, a potent liberalizing influence? Who will deny, that, coupled with the historical method which Ingersoll employed in biblical argument, it did not sustain very important accessory, if not causal, relations to "higher criticism"? We must bear in mind that that term was unheard of

when he began his work; whereas, at its conclusion, we were constantly meeting with clerical utterances which, for all the theological bias they showed, might have been extracted from *Some Mistakes of Moses*. Marvelous the change! Principles and sentiments that were received with hisses by a vast majority of the laity, and by nearly all the clergy, when voiced in Ingersoll's first lecture, in 1860, were sanctioned and even applauded by theologians when the Great Agnostic uttered his last public word. Beginning his work when ignorance was a virtue,—when pandering hypocrisy was wont to place upon the brow of stupidity the wreath of popular sanction,—when candid speech was treated as a crime,—he lived to see in decay the vast structure of supernatural religion.

To the most conspicuous feature of this change, I would invite special attention. It will be recalled that, in a previous chapter (XIV), I quoted from Ingersoll a description of a Free Will Baptist sermon which he heard when a boy, and in which were vividly detailed the eternal tortures of the damned in hell. The impression which the sermon made upon Ingersoll will also be recalled.

When the latter began his anti-theological propaganda, the same fiendish belief in literal and everlasting hell-fire that was taught in this sermon was still practically universal. To the orthodox, hell was a glaring, scorching, roaring reality. Sermons to that effect, although lacking the lurid-

ness of the one which shocked the sensibilities of the boy Ingersoll, could be heard in a large majority of the churches. Even youth and childhood were unexempt. Little children could tell such of their playmates as chanced to have unbelieving parents all about the zealous labors of the trident-wielding, spear-tailed fiends of the underworld. In many thousands of orthodox homes, the monotonous gloom enwrapping the cradle was broken only by the glare of hell.

What a change had occurred when the great warrior fell asleep! The belief in everlasting torture,—in leering fiends,—no longer filled with horror the imagination of childhood. The cradle had been rescued; the nursery had been saved; and through the eastern windows fell warm and golden the sunlight of intelligence and freethought. Preachers had ceased to appeal to the argument of infinite revenge, and were discoursing upon "future retribution" or "conditional immortality." The text of the Free Will Baptist of Ingersoll's boyhood remained the same; the creeds still smouldered; but, in the minds of a vast majority, the orthodox hell was a remembered nightmare. As wrote the great propagandist himself, to a friend:—

"There is but little left for me to do. Jehovah is with Jove. The fires of hell have been extinguished. The struggle with superstition is nearly over. 'We have passed midnight, and the great balance weighs up morning.'"

Who had wrought this glorious change? Were the Unitarians a factor? Undoubtedly. Were the Universalists a factor? Undoubtedly. Were the Freethinkers, in general, a factor? Undoubtedly. But who was to be thanked for the existence of many of those Unitarians and Universalists, as such, and, especially, for hundreds of thousands of those Freethinkers? Who had wrought the glorious change? To this question, there is one answer, and in that answer, one word—a name that arches in seven-hued radiance the horizon of the future. It is *Ingersoll.* Of him it will be said:—

"He sought, by constant appeal to truth, reason, mental and moral integrity, physical and intellectual liberty, justice, mercy, humanity, sympathy, tenderness, love,—and, moreover, by personal example in each and all of these,—to make of earth a heaven; but it is his memory's richest reward, that he put out 'the ignorant and revengeful fires of hell.'"

Two hundred and eighty-nine years after the world's grandest martyr crumbled to sacred ashes at the bigot's stake, the pope of Rome, with malicious eyes, his own power slowly waning, saw rise within the shadow of the Vatican a monument to Giordano Bruno.

As with the memory of that intrepid man in the land of sun and blue and mirthful vine, so shall it be in every land with the memory of Ingersoll. For, dowered with nature's noblest gifts, he left,

in turn, to all mankind, the imperishable legacy of thought and deed. Sublime as the snow-mantled mountain, vast as the sea,—the origin of his genius as little understood as their origin,—he lived and wrought and passed to silence as naturally as they exist.

Rest at last, O wondrous and unconquered soul! Upon thy tranquil brow fell full and fair the mellow gleam of humanity's golden hope. In the eternal right beat bravely strong thy noble heart, and to the dim heights where tremulous broods the purpling dawn soared the winged envoys of thy tireless brain. Naught but the dregs of truth could quench thy jeweled lips. But too soon—thou wast not understood; for in the unwalled and limitless temple of thy mind dwelt Love and Liberty in perfect unreserve. Yet, trouble not. The detraction of the present thy fame can well afford; for thou art the hero,—the sage,—the saint,—of the better years to be. A worshiper of the ideal, thou didst live for posterity. Posterity will live for thee.

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